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FROM WASHINGTON

The crying game

"This proves he is the one who did these things," said Representative Enid Waldholtz, or rather Enid Greene, as she now calls herself, upon discovering that her estranged husband, Joe, was indicted last week by a federal grand jury on twenty-seven counts of bank fraud. "These things," as she refers to them disdainfully, are Joe's phony checks, written over two months and worth \$3 million. And thus begins the closing act of *Poor, Poor Enid*, who loved not wisely, but too well.

Not so fast, Enid. In the first place, "these things" would be more accurately described as "this thing," since there are hundreds of other charges still being investigated by the Justice Department, the FBI and the FEC, all of which implicate Enid Greene. There is, for example, the matter of the magic \$4 million that her father pumped into the campaign in its last two months. Enid says she never knew about it; it was a secret loan to Joe that daddy never told her about. Joe kept a lot of secrets, she says. He filled out all the FEC reports, and she just signed without looking at them. He picked up all the answering machine messages, and she never even knew the code. Joe paid the rent on the \$3,800 Georgetown townhouse, and Enid just lived there. Joe ... well, you get the picture. Never mind that two high-level campaign staffers wrote her long, detailed memos about financial improprieties, then quit when she ignored them. The point was, she snuffled in her five-hour press conference in December, "everything that I thought I knew about Joe Waldholtz that I loved and trusted was a lie."

Why, aside from rank prurience, should we follow this sordid saga? Well, because Enid Greene is an extreme example of an egregious phenomenon among the growing ranks of Republican women—a tendency for highly competent politicians to play vulnerable little wives when need be. Here, after all, is a woman elected to high office, the first freshman in seventy years to serve on the

Rules Committee, pursuing a lifestyle in every way like that of her liberal counterparts, who does not hesitate when the political tide turns against her to conjure up the wide-eyed country girl. Beneath the carapace of the pinstriped suit is a trembling Mormon housewife baffled by the big, bad world. The genius of Enid's press conference in December was not that she managed to hide her high-achieving career—she was a lawyer trained in political ethics, the Utah governor's former deputy chief of staff, chairman of the Young Republicans—but that these achievements *became* the explanation. "It was exactly because I was weary of always being the strong one that I thought I'd found someone who could accept me completely,

that it was okay when I cried and showed weakness and showed emotion, which I couldn't do as a trial attorney, which I couldn't do as a congressional candidate." Before I met Joe, I was hard like Hillary. Then Joe showed me that deep inside was a fragile little Utah girl. There I was, on top of the world, and little did I know I had nothing. Which is not exactly what she told the voters of Utah before the election.

Still, this Little Nell strategy was one her Republican colleagues instinctively took to. "He was charming. He was affable. He seemed to love Enid with all his heart and soul," said Representative Susan Molinari. "Who wouldn't in their right mind stop and say, 'Boy, that just sounds like a fairy tale come true for me....'"

Call them the modern-day Scarlett O'Haras. They pull out traditional feminine vulnerability when convenient but pay none of the price—no skipping college, staying home to raise the kids, slaving in the kitchen. My favorite recent example of phony eyelash batting is a "Diary" by Danielle Crittenden in her new conservative newsletter *The Women's Quarterly*. The subject: why women should take their husband's names. "A woman today who assumes her husband's name ... is asserting that she and her husband have formed a new family, distinct from all their previous ties, both permanent and total in its commitment," Crittenden writes. "Personally, I've always regarded a woman's tenacious use of her maiden name as a display of insecurity rather than a show of strength." Personally, Crittenden is married to David Frum. "Literary vanity prevents me from adopting his by-line," she explains cutely. "But in all other respects I am Mrs. His Wife."

As it turns out, the game does have a

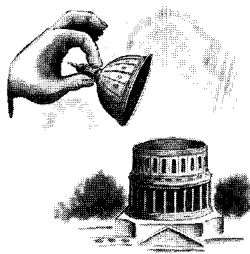
price. By contorting their successful selves into Barbie proportions, these professional women cartoonize the role of women in their future family-friendly America. They resurrect the icon of Mrs. Cleaver not because it's best for America, but as a convenient political excuse. And suddenly the family values campaign starts looking like the Oprah Winfrey show. Which brings us back to Enid. Joe Waldholtz is not a charming man. In fact, a more Dickensian villain could hardly be imagined. He is overweight and sweats a lot. He is accused of stealing his 67-year-old mother's mortgage, pressuring her bank to foreclose on her house and stealing up to \$700,000 from his senile grandmother's trust fund.

But Enid's rambling revelation didn't stop with her husband's financial improprieties. In order to convey her innocence, she had to share "personal, intimate details" of their life, she said in her press conference. It was later reported that her true confession was engineered by Eddie Mahe, the GOP snake who is doing damage control for

GOPAC. On Mahe's advice, Enid referred vaguely to Joe's "alternative lifestyle" and to his having lied about his religion. Two weeks later, a maid turned up to say she'd found gay male porn magazines in the basement. And, as for religion, it turns out Joe was not, as he'd claimed, an Episcopalian, but—yikes!—a Jew. Perhaps Mahe was also the one who told her to turn her baby shower into a fund-raising event. And there is the sum of Enid's family values.

The point here is not that "Republican woman" is an oxymoron. Not all women have to be pro-choice, tree-hugging feminists. They can believe abortion is a sin; they can even, like Bay Buchanan, be single mothers running campaigns for candidates who think women should be housewives. But there's something creepy about enjoying all the power and prestige that accrues to a highly successful female politician and then trying to evade the drawbacks—like public scrutiny—by resurrecting the delicate woman image. Democratic women might try this trick, but the frail vessel shtick doesn't work so well with their colleagues. Geraldine Ferraro, too, claimed she knew nothing about her husband's questionable investments, but at least she did it with dignity. It's condescending, not compassionate, to hold women to a different standard of culpability at the first show of tears. So toughen up ladies, and put those handkerchiefs away.

HANNA ROSIN





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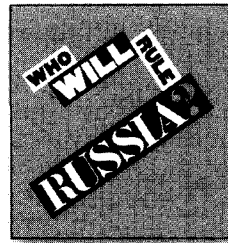
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CORRESPONDENCE

Losing their appetite

To the editors:

James Cramer's suggestion ("Let Them Eat Stocks," April 29) that laid-off workers be given stock options in lieu of severance pay is well intended but deeply misguided. Cramer fails to recognize that stock options are traded commodities. If laid-off workers want to use some or all of their severance pay to purchase options, they can do so. Typically they choose not to because options are very risky, and in general unemployed people prefer holding more secure and liquid assets such as cash. Cramer is correct in saying that any stock price increase that accompanies the layoff announcement will increase the value of the options. But he misleads by intimating that this value is created out of thin air, saying his plan requires "no money from the companies themselves." Of course in the end the value increase comes from the same place severance pay does—the pockets of stockholders, when option redemptions lead to dilution and a drop in the stock price. So the shareholders and firm are neither helped nor harmed, but the employees are adversely affected since they are in effect forced to invest their severance pay in securities not of their choosing.

The absurdity of Cramer's plan is highlighted when we consider (as Cramer evidently did not) the question of who gains and who loses when severance pay is replaced by stock options. When relatively unproductive employees are laid off, firm efficiency improves, and the stock price rises, benefiting those who hold options. But when highly productive, valuable workers are laid off due to poor business judgment, the company suffers, and stock options become nearly worthless. Thus the more valuable a group of displaced workers was to their employer, the more they will lose under Cramer's plan.

RANDOLPH B. COHEN
Chicago, Illinois

To the editors:

Great idea, James Cramer, though you realize that the market's response to downsizing will likely change if and when your plan becomes commonplace.

Such is the perversity of the marketplace. Or could it be that by subtitled his concept "A Modest Proposal" Cramer is simply Swiftly following in the footsteps of the master of bitter irony and is fully cognizant of the market's obstinacy?

WAYNE BEYER
Chevy Chase, Maryland

Lite at the end of the tunnel

To the editors:

I was distressed to read Alex Heard's off-handed remarks linking Ted Kaczynski, the so-called "unhinged Berkeley professor," with the Unabomber ("Mommie Dearest," April 29). Despite daily news reports from Montana, to the American judicial system Mr. Kaczynski is only suspected of being the mythical Unabomber. Like all defendants, Mr. Kaczynski is innocent until proven guilty.

ELIZABETH STARLING
St. Paul, Minnesota

To the editors:

Alex Heard's engaging account of enviro-millennialism simplifies a key factor in the paradoxical longevity of apocalyptic movements and thus obscures a telling difference between contemporary groups such as Earth Changes and wacky predecessors like Early Christianity.

As Heard notes, all end-of-the-world groups need doctrinal "safety valves" allowing them to continue after the world fails to end on schedule (what eschatologists tactfully refer to as the "disconfirming event"). Typically, however, these escape hatches evolve only after the traumatic failure of prophecy. Indeed, such retooling is a psychological response to the unpleasant predicament that inevitably results from stating that the world will end, for example, in the year after March 21, 1843 (as the Millerites did).

But in today's apocalypticism lite, the escape hatches are built in from the beginning. You don't have to stick your neck out with such easily disprovable claims—a vague unease with the state of the world is sufficient. As befits our something-for-everyone, consumer-friendly culture, apocalypticism has been defanged and predigested to be accessible to the widest possible audience. Even the end of the world, it seems, isn't what it used to be.

BRADLEY BLOCH
New York, New York

Stretch marks

To the editors:

In an attempt to justify an idiosyncratic interpretation of St. Paul's statements regarding homosexual practice, Robert A. Hettinger (Correspondence, April 29) quotes St. Paul as allegedly stating that heterosexual monogamous marriage is not the Christian ideal. Thus, since Christians do not take Paul seriously on this point, they should be equally free in their interpretation of his views on homosexuality.

I Corinthians 7, which Hettinger quotes, is not an attempt by St. Paul to set

forth a theology of marriage. Like most of his letters, this communication was an attempt to deal with concrete problems that arose in the lives of Christian communities that Paul had ministered to. In view of the severe persecutions that Christians were undergoing at that time, Paul was offering pastoral advice that the single life would involve fewer complications. In no sense was he legislating for the church or prejudging future contingencies. In fact, in Ephesians 5:25-33, Paul's high view of marriage is made abundantly clear, and, in I Timothy 3:2, it is implied that most Christian pastors will be married.

It is important in looking at any biblical passage to consider the context within which the passage is embedded. In any event, to consider Paul's pastoral advice on the subject of marriage as being on the same level as his unequivocal statements regarding homosexual behavior is quite a stretch, to put it as charitably as I know how.

D. B. DELANO
Los Angeles, California

Trade wars

To the editors:

Michael Lind displays a thin skin ("Smear Tactics," April 29) while turning to innuendo to justify a silly charge of "smear tactics" against me for my *New York Times* op ed and against Charles Lane.

Lind should know that you cannot have it both ways: take a striking position on an issue and have it taken seriously by only those you admire and not by those you despise. Indeed, one's fate is often to have one's ideas vulgarized and misused by those one despises and ignored by those one admires.

That Pat Buchanan's specific trade policy ideas on Japan were not merely the results of such misuse but came directly from the mainstream policy wonks, many walking the corridors of the Clinton administration, is both undeniable and is what I argued. Did Buchanan invent for himself the notion that Japan is a "threat," that its trade policies are "unfair," that Japan ought to be "contained," that (in view of all this) we ought to levy an across-the-board tariff on Japan of 10 percent? No, Mr. Lind: go and read James Fallows in *The Atlantic Monthly*, and you will find that he discusses with warmth a Bush *shokku* that would enact a 20 to 25 percent, not just Buchanan's modest 10 percent, across-the-board tariff on Japan, citing sources such as Rudiger Dornbusch, a well-known advocate of the use of such weaponry. Buchanan clearly has read these gentlemen. If Buchanan is a mad bomber, he certainly found his bombs, not just their compo-

nents, on our front porches, not even our backyards.

And it would be a heroic folly to assume that the administration's vote-seeking, flamboyant and assiduous adoption of a confrontational if ineffective policy on trade with Japan, and the influential writings in the media of the Japan-worriers such as Lind, did not serve to water the fields which Buchanan ploughs.

Instead of growing up and accepting this reality, Lind whines. He sees me as part of a "libertarian" attempt to "associate liberals with a particularly noxious far-right extremist." This will appear as hilarious to my friends as to my foes.

I must confess to being a registered Democrat, a social liberal and even a happy member of the MIT diaspora who was also for twelve years on the MIT faculty. I used the description (he puts it in quotes) of Dornbusch as an MIT economist because he is not a celebrity and needs identification, not because I wished to imply, as Lind clearly thinks, that he was a "liberal."

Lind charges me with creating an "enemies list." But academics call the "naming of names" the citing of sources. Lind's ignorance of this culture is equally manifest when he wrongly cites my affiliation, to reinforce his libertarian conspiracy thesis, as the American Enterprise Institute. Of course, I am at Columbia University. Like many academics, I have found it useful to work briefly with or at several reputed institutions, including both Brookings and the AEI (with whom I terminated my periodic visits last year). But Lind would not understand that, would he?

JAGDISH BHAGWATI
New York, New York

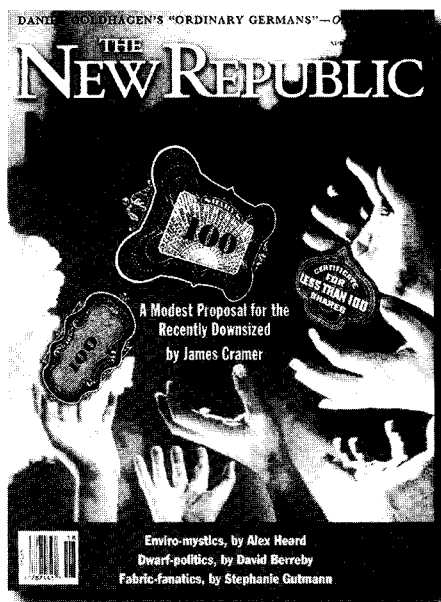
To the editors:

While I have no desire to accuse Michael Lind of being a "Buchananite" or to expel him from the ranks of organized liberalism, I would like to question his extremely problematic use of labor history in the cause of a more restrictive immigration policy.

First, in "Huddled Excesses" (April 1) Lind argues that immigration restriction laid the groundwork for labor's gains in the extremely broad period, 1920 to 1960. Unfortunately, Lind fails to compare these years with the decades that preceded them. Between 1880 and 1920—during the height of virtually unrestricted immigration—the ranks of organized labor grew from less than 60,000 to over 5 million. By contrast, in the first three years following the Emergency Quota Act of 1921, organized labor lost over 20 percent of its membership, over 1 million members. This is why labor historians refer to the 1920s as "the Lean Years." Meanwhile, most of the gains that

Lind attributes to restriction occurred nearly two decades after the laws were passed. So much for easy correlations.

Then, in "Smear Tactics" (April 29), Lind compounds this mistake by putting forth a crude labor-market segmentation argument, hijacking David Brody as his authority. Nobody denies, of course, that employers used ethnic differences to create disunity among workers. But, in the thirty-six years since Brody published the classic *Steelworkers in America*, a number of scholars have questioned whether immigration actually impeded unionization. In crafts where particular ethnic groups gained control over a niche—in the garment industry, in the building trades and in public transit—ethnicity frequently proved to be the foundation upon which organizers built strong unions. And even



in Big Steel, as Lizabeth Cohen, a Brody student, has recently shown, cultural difference proved to be an impediment to organization only as long as labor refused to confront it constructively. The CIO's successes of the '30s were directly attributable to its successful appeal to ethnicity on behalf of industrial unionism. If the modern labor movement and its supporters wish to duplicate the successes of that period, they must build upon existing cultural structures rather than seeking to limit their presence in the American economy.

ANDREW WENDER COHEN
Chicago, Illinois

To the editors:

Thanks for giving Michael Lind space to clear up the difference between his lukewarm "liberal nationalism" and the America First economic nationalism of Pat Buchanan.

It's hard to see why left-wing libertarians like Virginia Postrel can't make the

distinction. Building on badly potted history and loony-left idealism, Lind has constructed a "nationalism" that bears only a nominal resemblance to Buchanan's nationalism, which has its roots in the all-American tradition of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Henry Clay, Abraham Lincoln and Teddy Roosevelt.

For Postrel-types who are still confused, here's a litmus test for telling authentic nationalism from the liberal pretenders: if it's fit to print in journals like *The Atlantic Monthly* and *THE NEW REPUBLIC*, it doesn't deserve to be associated with Pat Buchanan.

JOHN CARNEY
Chevy Chase, Maryland

Wage fright

To the editors:

Matthew Miller's ("Econ 2," April 29) conversion to the raise-the-minimum-wage camp ranks him among the minority of economists. And for good reason. The vast majority of authoritative studies have agreed with the ivory-tower economic theories that hold that raising the minimum wage causes joblessness. Miller's reference to the raft of recent studies showing otherwise probably relates to news generated by one recent authoritative study that showed no increase in joblessness. This analysis was performed by respected economists David Card and Alan Krueger who studied fast-food outlets on the New Jersey/Pennsylvania border after New Jersey raised its minimum wage. However, follow-up studies, which have been mostly ignored by the press, have overwhelmingly reaffirmed the traditional ivory-tower view.

Of course, today's minimum wage of \$4.25 is puny, but so is the proposed new one of \$5.15. Someone earning \$5.15 per hour working full time all year would earn well under \$10,000. Thus, the notion that raising the minimum wage somehow makes it a living wage is rather farfetched. Furthermore, the joblessness such an increase would create would have a lasting impact on the ability of low-skill workers to ultimately earn a true living wage. The real importance of keeping the minimum wage low is that it allows relatively unproductive laborers into the workforce, where they can receive on-the-job training. Indeed, one recent study has shown that workers hired as minimum-wage workers average approximately \$6 per hour one year later. So, while I know this year's burger builder may not be able to afford a family, I think next year's kitchen manager might.

DAVE ESRIG
West Orange, New Jersey

Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Education and Productivity

Last year, a survey of 3,000 businesses nationwide reported that companies hiring young graduates pay very little attention to their high school achievement. This was not exactly news. It simply made explicit the weak link in the U.S. between school and work that some people have been worried about for a long time. But when researchers did further analyses of the survey data, they found something else. Whether or not businesses ignore it, there is a solid connection between a company's productivity and the education of its workers.

The National Employer Survey, as it is called, was carried out by the U.S. Census Bureau for the U.S. Department of Education in 1994. The survey found that businesses rank measures of formal education—years of schooling, test scores, the reputation of the school an applicant attended, and the applicant's grades—below nonschool measures. And though they consider recommendations from current and past employers important, *teacher* recommendations are at the bottom of the list.

If asked to explain why they have little interest in school performance, the businesses would undoubtedly have said that high school graduates are often so poorly prepared that it is not worth the time and expense to see whether John got better grades or took tougher courses than Bill. The trouble is, as I wrote in an earlier column about this survey ("Linking School and Work," April 23, 1995), this is a "self-fulfilling prophecy." If a lot of people start withdrawing money from a bank because they are afraid it will fail, the bank will certainly fail. When businesses regularly disregard what students have accomplished in school, most students will see no reason to take tough courses instead of easy ones. In fact, they'll feel stupid if they do. As a result, educational achievement will continue to slide.

However, a second round of findings based on data from the National Employer Survey links hiring more-educated workers with increased productivity. In "The Other Shoe: Education's Contribution to the Productivity of Establishments," researchers from the National Center on the Educational Quality of the Workforce looked first at the effect on productivity associated with an increase in the book value of a company's capital stock. They found that a 10 percent increase in capital



As the survey makes clear, businesses that ignore education in their hiring decisions are missing the boat.

stock was associated with a 3.4 percent increase in productivity. If hours worked were increased by 10 percent, there was a 5.6 percent increase in productivity. But a 10 percent increase in employees' average education (which is equal to a little more than one additional year of schooling) was associated with an 8.6 percent increase in productivity. This was true for all the businesses surveyed. When researchers looked at productivity increases in the nonmanufacturing sector, they found an even greater effect: A 10 percent increase in education was associated with a hefty 11 percent increase in productivity. The same survey that established the unimportance of education in hiring decisions also makes clear that businesses that ignore education are missing the boat.

Additional analyses of data from the National Employer Survey also indicate that considering applicants' education makes a difference in employee turnover and thus in recruitment costs. According to "Weighing the Benefits: Incentives for Connecting Schools and Employers" (*Change* magazine, March/April 1996), many employers say they don't bother screening applicants. Instead they "try them out," a technique that results in "a series of hires and fires until both employer and employee [find] a suitable match." In contrast, companies that use school measures as "important criteria" in screening candidates have a much lower turnover rate: During the first year, there is a 10 percent difference between employers who consider education important and those who do not. Undoubtedly this means that companies that pay attention to school measures save money on recruitment and on training new employees.

Should we be surprised that hiring workers who are more educated leads to greater productivity or job stability? I don't think so. Still, it is difficult to turn around a settled practice, like ignoring school achievement, and if it takes quantitative research to establish the obvious, so be it. (We are certainly used to that in education.) Furthermore, the results of this survey will make it easier for business leaders to carry out the pledge they made at the Education Summit in March—that is, to pressure companies to begin calling for school transcripts when they are hiring recent graduates. And when that happens, we'll know we are on our way to establishing a connection between school and work.

For more information on the National Employer Survey or to obtain a copy of "The Other Shoe," call 800-437-9799.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1996 by Albert Shanker.

ADVERTISEMENT

MAY 27, 1996

NO ENTRY

As Democrats and Republicans compete in pandering to voters' economic anxiety, the immigration issue just keeps cropping up. Last week, Republicans in the Senate joined their House counterparts in passing a bill loaded with every thumbscrew and nail to keep foreigners away from America's borders. Clinton has quibbles with some of the measures, primarily the provision, modeled on California's Proposition 187, to deny schooling for children of illegal immigrants—but otherwise he is all for immigration restrictions.

It could be worse. The original version of the bill cut back on legal immigration as well. And, while it's silly to blame all the country's economic problems on Pat Buchanan's friend José, concern about illegal immigration isn't entirely irrational. The number of illegal immigrants entering the country has been growing steadily over the past decade. And the ease with which they can buy counterfeit documents is a joke among them.

But, in keeping with the custom of American immigration reform, the bills do little about the magnet of employment. Always wary of crossing their business allies, Republicans talked tough on workplace sanctions but left the bills toothless. When, for example, an amendment was introduced to hire 150 new work-site inspectors to check the documentation of employees, Republicans rejected it. The bills do include a new verification system, which allows employers to call a 1-800 number to determine whether a worker's Social Security card or other papers are phony. But House Republicans opted to make participation voluntary.

Instead, the Republicans resorted to something they think their voters can understand—brute force. Both bills nearly double the number of border patrol agents over the next four years. And the agents get all kinds of low- and high-tech toys from their friends in Washington. From the House, the infamous three-tier, fourteen-mile fence south of San Diego. From the Senate, low-level lighting, all-weather roads and ground sensors. And, in eager anticipation of more catches, some extra square feet of detention space. This simpleminded solution has a visceral appeal and will no doubt stop more illegals from jumping the fence. But, as long as there are employers willing to hire, the foreigners will come. And, besides, the INS is already complaining that many of the new hires are undertrained—the border patrol has been beefed up by a third—and that the novices are

overwhelming the veterans.

There are other egregious provisions in the House bill. An amendment introduced by California Representative Elton Gallegly revives the odious Proposition 187—giving states the right to withhold public schooling for children of illegal immigrants. Several California judges have already declared the provision unconstitutional. We'll declare it callous and counterproductive, as well. What possible social good could come of turning teachers into border guards and keeping 10-year-old children out of school? The idea is especially strange coming from conservatives worried about resistance to assimilation.

The other misguided measure denies due process for aliens seeking asylum. Currently, immigrants requesting asylum are granted a hearing before an immigration judge. Under the House bill, asylum applicants must demonstrate their case upon entry and only before an INS officer and his direct supervisor. They will be allowed a few minutes to make their case without the help of lawyers or translators. If the officer denies the claim, it means immediate deportation without judicial review. One automatic cause for disqualification, under the bill, will be forged passports. Yet most of those fleeing persecution in their own countries have no choice but to use phony documents.

The bills even sneak in what amounts to a restriction on legal immigrants. The House bill raises the amount sponsors must earn to 200 percent of the poverty level, a target many would have a hard time meeting. This restriction has a snowball effect. When applying for government benefits, the income of the sponsor counts. While 95 percent of immigrants never go on welfare, there are a few groups, like the elderly and desperate refugees, that do. This provision plays on the myth of immigrants as welfare sops and would wind up hurting only the most vulnerable.

It's not that we're against reasonable immigration reform. And we're neither shocked nor naïve about what goes on during an election year. But rather than shouting for the C-SPAN cameras and then winking when the lens is turned, why not show some courage and take on the real culprits—businesses that hire illegal immigrants? We'll wait for Bob Dole to take on the farmers first. •



NOTEBOOK

GAS ATTACK: President Clinton's refusal to defend his minuscule 1993 gasoline tax increase, which both reduced the deficit and promoted energy efficiency, has grown increasingly irksome as the case against repealing it has grown weaker. Previously, the administration has countered GOP tax cut proposals by warning that they'll lead to cuts in education and environmental spending—not always an honest objection, since there are plenty of other programs to trim instead. But, this time, the charge may actually be true. On "Meet the Press," House Majority Leader Dick Armey was asked how he would make up for the revenue lost by cutting the tax. In a burst of self-immolating candor, he replied, "Maybe we ought to take another look at the amount of money we're spending on education." (Two days later Armey flatly stated that "nobody has discussed education" as a way of funding the tax cut.) Meanwhile, *The Washington Post* reported that most economists believe reducing the gasoline tax would result in higher profits for oil companies rather than lower consumer prices. The president, in other words, could plausibly argue that the GOP wants to transfer money from schools to oil companies. Yet Clinton won't go further than feebly promising to negotiate, and Democratic resolve in Congress wanes by the day.

IFOR ON TRIAL: Three months ago, *TNR* published the first eyewitness account of the horrors at the Omarska concentration camp in Bosnia. This week, Dusan Tadic, one of Omarska's butchers, went on trial in the first test of the war crimes tribunal convened in the Hague. His crimes were as unspeakable as they were ordinary—killing, raping, torturing those Muslim men and women under his guard. Of the fifty-seven suspects indicted by the tribunal, only six relatively minor figures are in custody. The rest enjoy freedom, even admiration, among

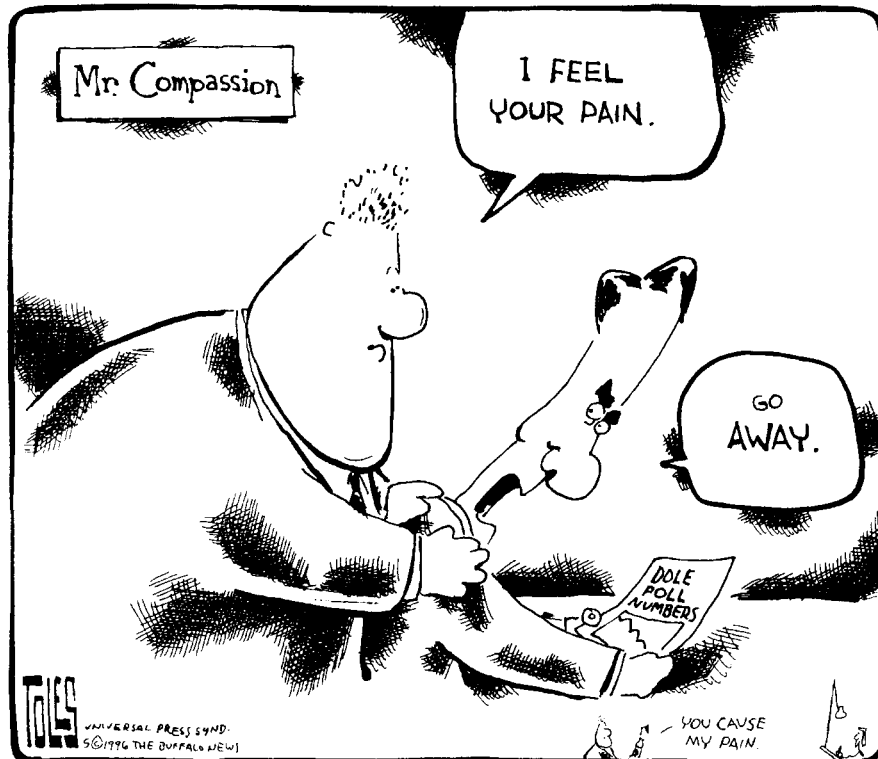
their Serbian compatriots, and little can be done to apprehend them. Or so IFOR's commanders would have us believe. In fact, given IFOR's overwhelming firepower and the demobilization and disillusionment of the Serbian militias, arresting these suspects is a relatively simple matter. What it requires is the one quality that has consistently eluded Western governments, and hence their military commanders on the ground: the will to confront the soldiers of Greater Serbia. Any peace in Bosnia, whether unified or partitioned, requires the punishment of war criminals, if only to ensure that the memory of justice, as well as of genocide, remains in the minds of the Bosnian people. It is the one honorable

legacy that the U.S. can leave behind.

ALL IN THE FAMILY: In the spirit of Mother's Day, the Republicans have reversed a travesty in adoption laws that Democrats had been trying—and failing—to reverse for years. As part of a larger adoption reform bill, New York Republican Susan Molinari has introduced a provision making it illegal for agencies to pre-

vent adoptions on the basis of race. The reform punctures a taboo erected by a fringe group called the National Association of Black Social Workers, which has kept black babies out of the homes of white parents. This may seem like an invented problem until you hear horror stories of crack-addicted black infants snatched away from their white foster parents and returned to institutions as soon as these parents expressed an interest in adopting them. Or until you learn that every poll that's been done shows, contrary to conventional wisdom, that white parents actually are interested in adopting black children. It's simple math: the great majority of foster children, whose ranks are growing every day, are black. And the great majority of parents on adoption waiting lists are white. It's high time we retire the taboo.

KINKY LOGIC: In an article last week about the upcoming Massachusetts Senate race, *The Weekly Standard's* Christopher Caldwell critiqued Bay State Governor William Weld, finding his laissez-faire Republican-



ism guilty, in the vocabulary of orthodox believers everywhere, of "contradictions." Weld, you see, supports gay rights but wants "to track sex-offenders on their release from prison..." Where's the contradiction? Well, Caldwell explains, "The result is that if you make a pass at a boy on his eighteenth birthday, the state will jail anyone who refuses to rent you an apartment or give you a job on that account. If you make a pass at a boy who's a day younger, society will hunt you to the ends of the earth..." Actually, the result is that if you seek unconsensual sex, or sex with minors who cannot legally consent, you're guilty of sexual abuse regardless of whether you're gay or straight. And this, of course, has nothing to do with gay rights. Unless, that is, you think gays are prone to molesting, which countless studies show is bigoted nonsense, or you cannot conceive of consensual gay sex, which is essentially the same thing.

OFF BASE: OK, so it's hard to be a hawk these days. With the fading of the Red Menace, it takes a lot more effort to direct the military to its best uses. But do

we really have no better mission for American soldiers than turning them into choir boys? Not according to hellfire conservatives Robert Dornan and Christopher Smith, who have introduced the loftily named Military Honor and Decency Act, banning the sale of "sexually explicit material" from army bases. (Dornan, you'll recall, is the legislator who's been insisting—over the military's objections—that soldiers found to be HIV-positive be expelled.) The point of this new bill, say Dornan and Smith, is to shield children of military families who may wander into base stores. Then, displaying his Dr. Strangelove tendencies, Dornan added that magazines like *Playboy* and *Penthouse* "can also compromise our defense readiness." We'll leave that one to your imagination. Anyway, if the clear and present danger is gays in the military, you'd think the more Playmates the better.

WELL, EXCEPT FOR THAT: "[Y]ou look at what they charged me with and what they found me guilty of and

see if you can tell me they won, except for putting me in jail."

—Dan Rostenkowski in *The Washington Post*, May 1.

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING: "[From] Everything you read, when [Hitler] came in he was good. They built tremendous highways and got all the factories going. He went nuts, he went berserk. I think his own generals tried to kill him, didn't they? Everybody knows he was good at the beginning, but he just went too far."

—Cincinnati Reds owner Marge Schott, defending her ownership of a World War II armband with a swastika on it.

DRAMATIC IRONY: Joseph Brodsky's poem "Ode to Concrete," which appears on page 38, will strike readers as ominously ironic: "You'll outlast me, good old concrete..." And so it has. It is worth compounding the irony by recording the fact that this poem, typical in its self-effacement, at once genial and philosophical, was the last

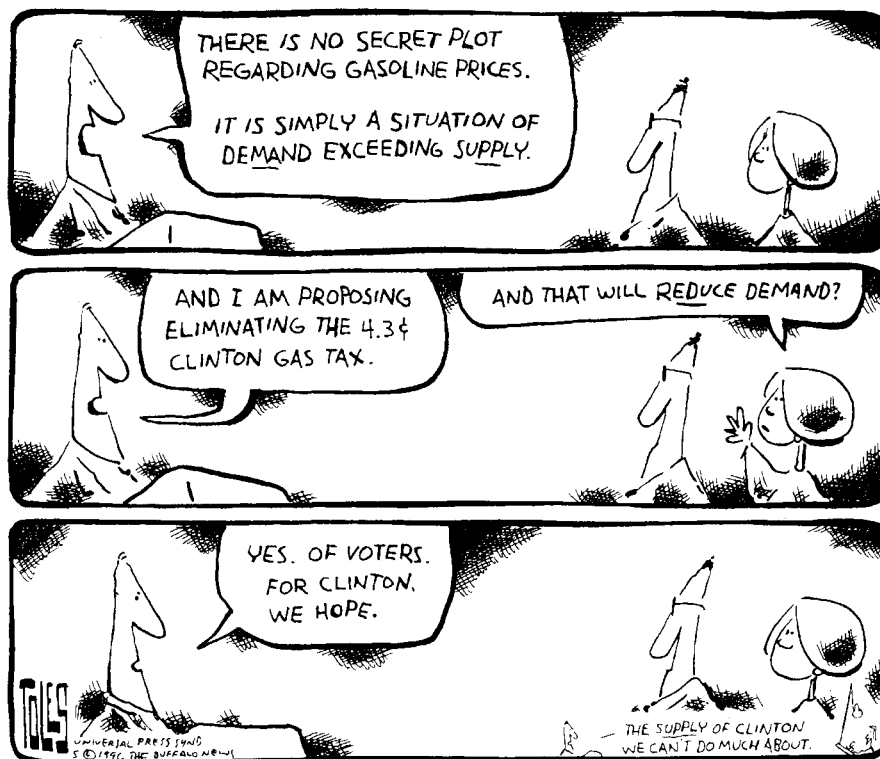
poem that Brodsky wrote. With good humor, the poet expounded upon his own mortality, and then he died.

IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE?

My miserable enunciation must be really deteriorating for reporter Esther Iverem to quote me as saying "White powers are choosing our renaissances" ["Renaissance Meets Reality; Black Writers Dispute Theme That Sold Funders on Their Conference," *Style*, April 5]. What I said was that "Time Warner is choosing our renaissances."

ISHMAEL REED
Oakland, Calif.

—*The Washington Post*, May 2.



BENCH MARKED

By Jeffrey Rosen

"He talks a great game, and right now 55 percent of the people view him as a moderate. We need to change that. That's why we're talking about his liberal judges."

—Bob Dole, *The Wall Street Journal*, May 3, 1996.

Judicial bashing, by and large, is a wholesome tradition in American democracy. Jefferson's attacks on the "sappers and miners" of the Federalist judiciary helped to chasten a rabidly partisan Justice Samuel Chase. FDR's saber-rattling hastened the "switch-in-time" that saved the New Deal. And thirty years of Republican broadsides against the liberal judicial activism of the Warren Court precipitated an intellectual shift among the Democrats that led to the appointments of Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer, voices of liberal judicial restraint.

Now comes the crepuscular Senator Dole, who plans to make judge-bashing a centerpiece of his wilting presidential campaign. But, unlike Nixon, Reagan and Bush, Dole has embraced a rhetorical and substantive vision of the judiciary that is comically incoherent. Although he mouths the usual platitudes about judicial restraint, his brief against the Clinton judges amounts to a rambling complaint that they are upholding acts of Congress that Dole himself supported. Clinton's response has been to berate and renounce his own judges. Instead, he should relish the chance to paint Dole as a helpless slave to judicial activism, a man so ashamed of his legislative legacy that he is calling on the courts to dismantle it.

"If President Clinton has four more years and appoints just one more justice to the Supreme Court," Dole admonished on April 19, "[w]e could lock in liberal judicial activism for the next generation, and the social landscape could be dramatically changed: more federal intrusion into the lives of average Americans; more centralized power in Washington; less freedom of religious expression; more rights for criminals; and more arrogant disregard of the rights of law-abiding citizens." Dole promised to appoint "somebody who's read the Constitution, understands what it means, knows what the Tenth Amendment's all about, and is not trying to be a judicial activist."

Each of these phrases is a non sequitur. After all, Dole himself, not the Supreme Court, is responsible for "more federal intrusion in the lives of average Americans." The most hotly contested questions before the Rehnquist Court concern the constitutionality of fed-

eral laws that Dole, at the time, enthusiastically supported: federally mandated set-asides for minority businesses, the Voting Rights Amendments of 1982, the expansion of federal criminal jurisdiction and federal civil rights protections for the disabled, women and minorities. Faced with challenges to each of these laws, the Clinton appointees, Ginsburg and Breyer, have voted consistently for judicial restraint, arguing that judges should defer to the policy preferences of elected representatives such as Senator Dole. This principled commitment to deference leads Breyer and Ginsburg to conservative as well as liberal results: both voted last term, for example, to approve random drug testing of student athletes.

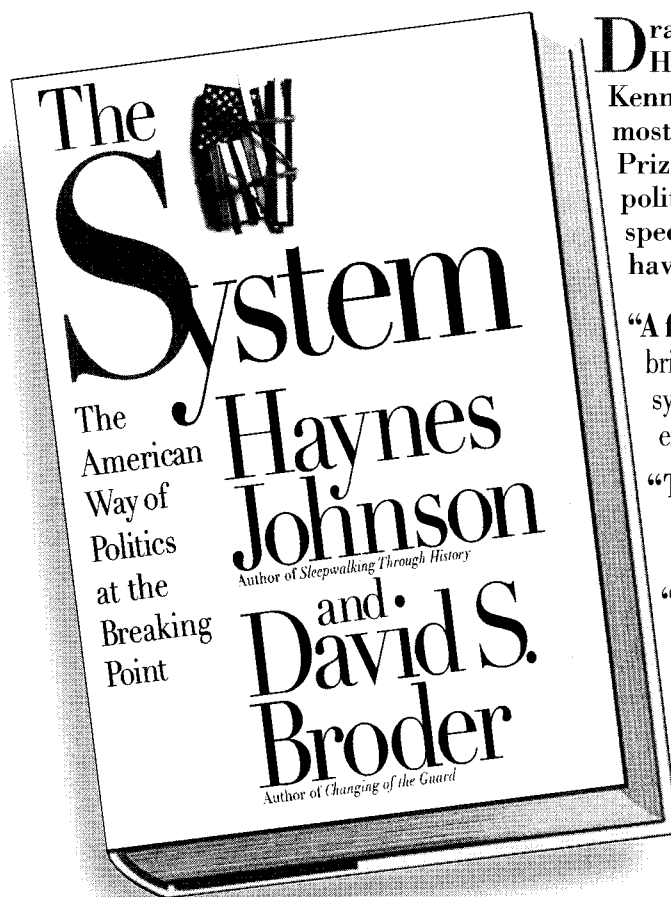
Dole has also been singling out President Clinton's nominees to the federal appellate courts for "attempting to stamp their own brand of stealth liberalism on America." But here, too, the charge of liberal judicial activism is often spurious. In several of the disputed opinions, the Clinton judges concluded that Congress had not meant to federalize the underlying crime in the first place. Consider the Republican attack on Judge Diana Gribbon Motz, a Clinton appointee to the Fourth Circuit. The disputed case involved a striking member of the United Mine Workers union who shot a security guard crossing a picket line. Instead of being charged with murder or manslaughter, he was convicted of violating a federal statute that makes it illegal to damage commercial vehicles used in interstate commerce. Judge Motz argued plausibly in dissent that because the security vans operated entirely in West Virginia the federal conviction should not stand. "In light of the recent efforts towards 'de-federalization,'" Motz wrote, "it is surprising that the majority chooses to convert what would otherwise be a classic state-law offense, with strong local overtones, into a federal crime." And other decisions in Dole's "judicial hall of shame" involve efforts by Clinton judges to construe federal criminal statutes narrowly, in the spirit of the Tenth Amendment. ("Dole judges," Dole intoned, "will know the Tenth Amendment by heart.")

Not all the Republican criticisms can be answered so easily: as the recent firestorm over Judge Harold Baer shows, some Clinton nominees *are* more likely to side with criminal defendants than are their Republican colleagues. But instead of defending its nominees on substantive grounds the Clinton administration has cravenly sided with its critics. First Clinton suggested, through his press secretary, that Judge Baer should resign if he did not reverse himself. And, in a disingenuous response published in *The Wall Street Journal* at the end of March, "LET'S PLAY 'WHOSE JUDGES ARE TOUGHER ON CRIME?'," the new White House Counsel, Jack Quinn, insisted that "[f]or every decision like Judge Baer's, I could point to another Reagan or Bush judge's decision" that is equally soft on crime.

By failing to draw a sharp line between the constitutional judgments of his judicial nominees and the pol-

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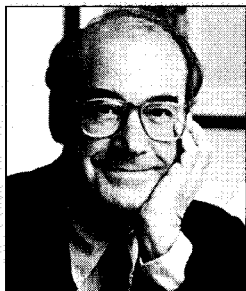
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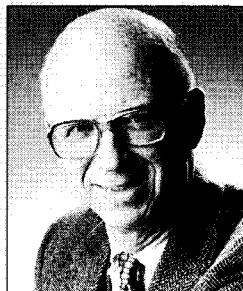
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HAYNES JOHNSON is the bestselling author of *Sleepwalking Through History* and a commentator on PBS's *Washington Week in Review* and *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*.



Joan Marcus



Washington Post

DAVID S. BRODER is a national political correspondent and columnist for the *Washington Post*, the bestselling author of *Changing of the Guard* and a regular on CNN, *Meet the Press*, and *Washington Week in Review*.



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icy judgments of his administration, Clinton is falling into a devious Republican trap. Over the next few months, according to a Republican strategist, Dole and other Senate Republicans plan to link the decisions of Clinton's judges with the substantive policies of his administration. For example, the Republicans will argue, the Clinton administration tolerates child pornography and then appoints judges to further its pro-pornography agenda. Senator Dole gave us a tantalizing preview of this strategy on April 23, when he lambasted Judges David Tatel and Judith Rogers of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, who had properly questioned the constitutionality of the FCC's sweeping regulations prohibiting the transmission of "indecent" on radio and television. "So while President Clinton touts the V-chip and holds high-profile White House conferences with television executives," Dole sneered, "his judges are attempting to strip the very protections that he supposedly supports."

Dole's attempt to elide the distinction between law and policy, to suggest that there is no difference between, say, a congressman's vote to support affirmative action and a judge's vote to uphold affirmative action, is an especially poignant expression of intellectual defeat. For the past thirty years, the Republicans have convincingly posed as the party of judicial principle, insisting that there was a meaningful difference between the role of a judge and the role of a legislator. Now the tables are turned, and the conservatives have calculated that the only way to enact their relatively unpopular political agenda—ending abortion, affirmative action and federal regulations—is through the courts rather than the political branches. So the party of judicial restraint has become the party of judicial activism. If President Clinton can bring himself to say so, judicial conservatives should support him as well. •

Will Russia's first real election be its last?

NONE OF THE ABOVE

By Masha Gessen

Russia is in the throes of what very nearly resembles a democratic campaign. And, in anticipation of the June 16 presidential elections, Russian society has grown more polarized than it has been since the war in Chechnya began a year and a half ago. A moral dilemma is forcing its way into public and quasi-public debates, shattering friendships and alliances at kitchen tables around Moscow as well as in large auditoriums and on TV. Lifelong friendships collapse under the weight of someone's commitment to

vote for Boris Yeltsin to stave off the putative communist threat, matched by someone else's inability to support the sitting president, who she believes should be declared a war criminal. All this acrimony is proof that a miracle has transpired: Russians are feeling a personal responsibility for the outcome of the election and the future that follows. By contrast, the last Russian presidential election, which brought Yeltsin to power, took place when Russia was still a republic of the Soviet Union and was, therefore, a largely symbolic contest for a symbolic post. That makes the upcoming vote this country's first democratic contest.

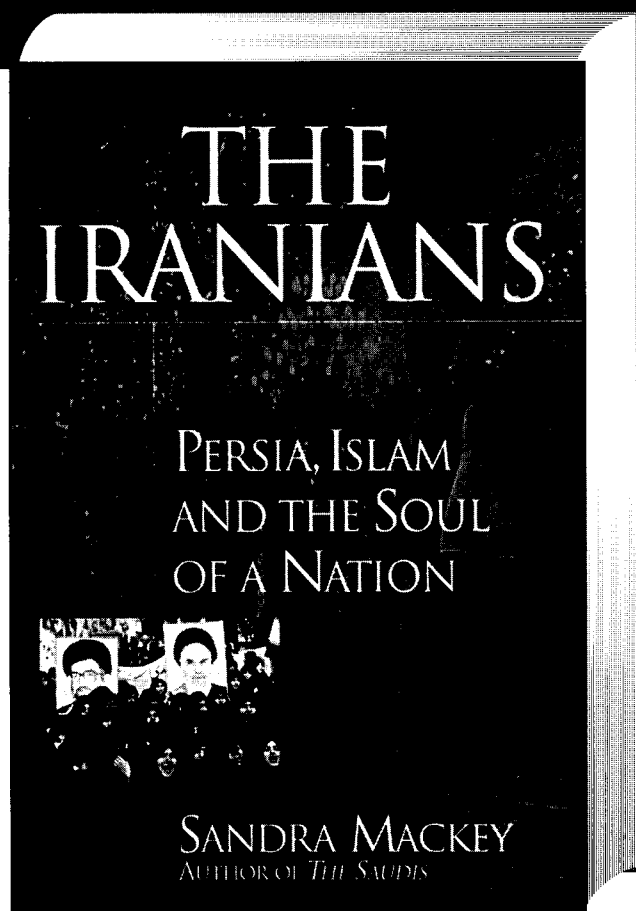
But something else is happening, too. The election's stakes seem so frighteningly high that democracy is striking more and more people as a dangerous and expensive luxury. Last week Yeltsin's influential security chief, Aleksandr Korzhakov, joined the growing chorus of powerful men calling for the election to be called off to prevent armed conflict, or, perhaps, a redistribution of wealth and power. But even if this call is not heeded it seems that, no matter the outcome, Russia's first election that is truly democratic in both spirit and mechanism comes at the price of democracy itself, payable in advance.

Before this election, Russia could boast a few rudimentary democratic developments. There was a limited plurality of views in the federal government. Economic policy, plodding as it was, was moving the country toward a stable market-driven future. On the whole, Russia had forged a loyal relationship with neighbor states that had recently belonged to the empire. And, perhaps most important of all, it could claim a relatively free press. These were the accomplishments a campaigning Yeltsin might have bragged about—except that they all appeared to handicap him.

As an incumbent who, at the start of the presidential race, was utterly devoid of charisma, conviction and the people's confidence, Yeltsin had only one available reelection strategy: blatant populism. Since his main asset has always been his unfailing nose for what Russian voters want, it was a shrewd strategy. It had been months of heart attacks and hospitalizations since the Russian people had seen their president. Now, like the good czar breaking through barriers erected by the bad boyars, he has emerged slimmed down and energized to satisfy the demands of his people. Gesticulating wildly, he stands in the central squares of Russian towns dispensing instant gratification.

For starters, Yeltsin sacrificed his advisers, purging the last of the liberal intelligentsia that had seen him through the past five years. The next sacrifice was the tight monetary policy that had finally curbed inflation in the last few months. Between paying off actual debts to the voters (delinquent salaries and pensions) and ordering simple handouts, the president has set the stage for soaring inflation in the coming months. Perhaps a bigger blow to the economy in the long run was the appointment, as the country's chief economic policymaker, of Vladimir Kadannikov, the head of a state-supported car maker that has consistently faltered

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despite its unchallenged control of the country's expanding car market.

Next, with a vague treaty signed in April, Yeltsin treated the country to the Eisensteinian spectacle of reunification with Belarus: rows of busty folk singers crooning Slavic marches; the Orthodox Patriarch blessing two presidents in a red-and-gold stairway scene; endless footage of conspicuous abundance. The resurrection of the empire may still prove merely symbolic—that is, offensive only on the aesthetic level. Even as a symbol, however, the friendly expansion to include a population of 10 million that has elected an ultranationalist president who thinks his country has lessons to learn from Hitler's Germany is a move deeply hostile to post-Soviet Russia's non-imperialist stance.

The fourth remaining pillar of Russian democracy, the independent media, rushed to sacrifice itself. Igor Malashenko, president of Independent Television, the only one of the country's three networks not owned by the state, joined Yeltsin's campaign as an adviser. With the almost-simultaneous removal of the head of one of the state TV networks for exercising too much discretion in political coverage, the country lost its sources of credible television news.

Then, starting in February, the liberal print media adopted a united strategy of portraying the presidential contest as a two-way race between the incumbent and his Communist challenger. Such coverage defied all poll results, which at the time showed the liberal economist Grigory Yavlinsky ahead of Yeltsin and suggested that Yavlinsky could beat front-running Communist Gennadi Zyuganov in the runoff. Conventional wisdom, however, had it that Yavlinsky, a half-Jewish member of the intelligentsia, could never be president. By leaving him out of coverage, the logic went, newspaper editors would help prop up Yeltsin, the lesser evil when compared with Zyuganov. Soon reality caught up with its newspaper reflection, and Yeltsin passed Yavlinsky in the polls.

Probably no one is haunted by communism's ghost more than people who deal in words. Writers and newspaper editors justify their support of Yeltsin with the conviction that the Communists would crack down on the media as soon as they seized power. Here bitter memory is speaking louder than logic, for there is no evidence that the Communists would be significantly more hostile to the media than the sitting president. When the newspapers and Independent Television were exposing the carnage in Chechnya, and the president continued to deny it, former party boss Yeltsin finally showed the current party bosses that talk is cheap: the media are nothing to fear or even notice.

Still, endless editorials in the liberal newspapers and addresses by a growing number of Moscow intellectuals make the same creepy arguments: everyone used to dismiss the bolshevik and national-socialist threats, too. Like all such historicist assertions, these are flawed. Russia, at least, has never yet been deceived by an evil it knew. If indeed the runoff presents a choice between Yeltsin and Zyuganov, as it seems it will, the evil Russia doesn't yet know will be embodied by Yeltsin as a

second- and last-term president.

With the president ailing, Yeltsin's re-election will leave power in the hands of his newly hard-line entourage, including his new administration chief, Nikolai Yegorov, one of the masterminds of the war in Chechnya, and whoever replaces Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who is probably on his way out. Yeltsin's—and the country's—worst post-election scenario would be an open conflict with the military precipitated by the president's pre-election attempt to put out the fire in Chechnya. Within weeks of Yeltsin's announcement of his peace plan, the president found himself in a stand-off with the defense minister and his trigger-happy, openly defiant generals who want to maintain the state of war along with the funding, independence and impunity it guarantees them.

Like most conflicts in this big, unwieldy country, this one will probably take months to come to a boiling point. But, when it does, it may make us all wish for the unfriendly but familiar days before Russia became very nearly democratic.

MASHA GESSEN is a staff writer at *Itogi*, a weekly news-magazine in Moscow.

Is Yiddish back from the dead?

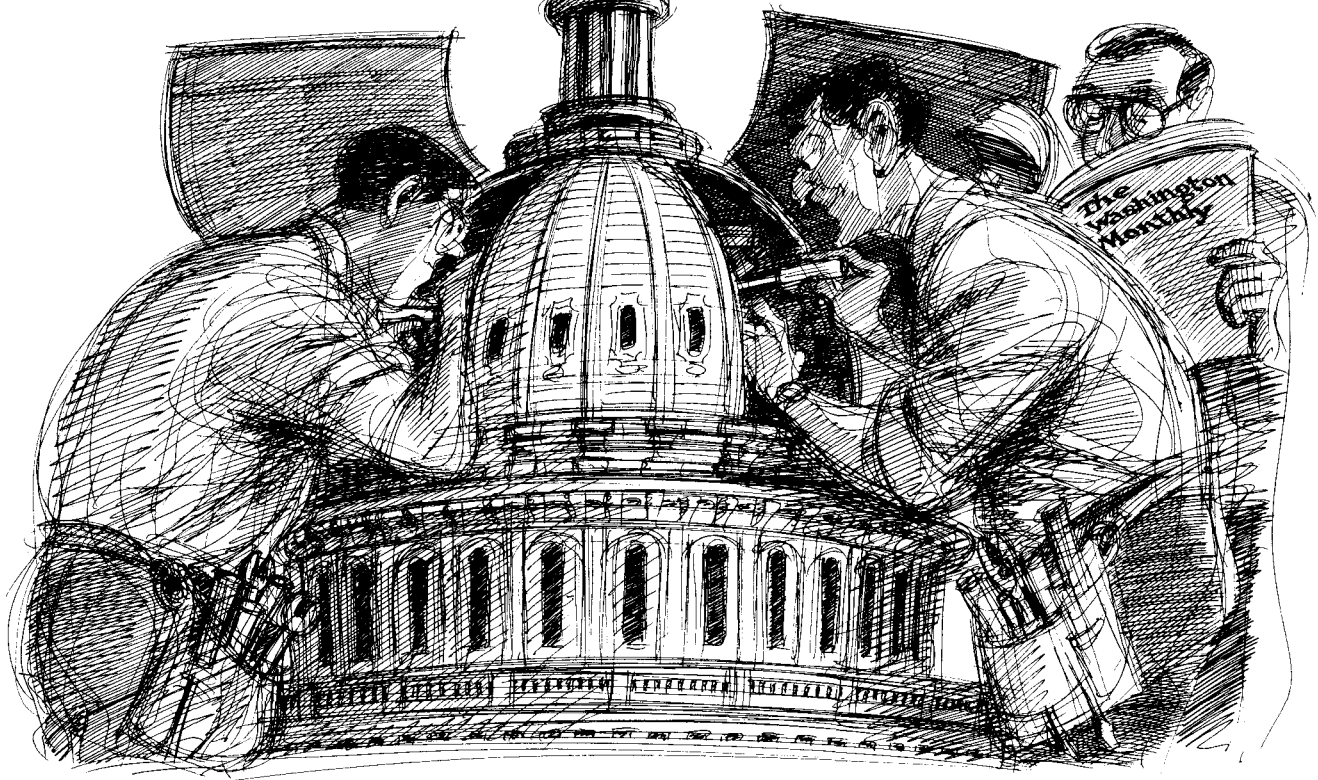
SHUL DAZE

By Ruth Wisse

About once a month, I get a call from a journalist asking me about the revival of Yiddish, the language once spoken by the vast majority of Jewish immigrants to America. My interviewer was impressed, perhaps, by a tour of the National Yiddish Book Center in South Hadley, Massachusetts, which houses over a million Yiddish books. Or he was blown away by an overflow concert of Klezmer music in New York. Or maybe he caught a retrospective of Yiddish film classics in San Francisco. The teaching position I hold at Harvard—a chair in Yiddish Studies—is proof in itself, my interviewer will say, that Yiddish language and literature are now being taught at some of the finest American universities, an accepted and growing part of the curriculum. I am tempted to tell my callers what they want to hear: yes, because my students can now study Sholem Aleichem in the original and write Yiddish letters to their grandparents—make that their *bobbes* and *zeydes*—a Yiddish renaissance is in the offing. But the reference to my academic post reminds me that I'm not being paid to lie.

By now, most immigrant groups in America, includ-

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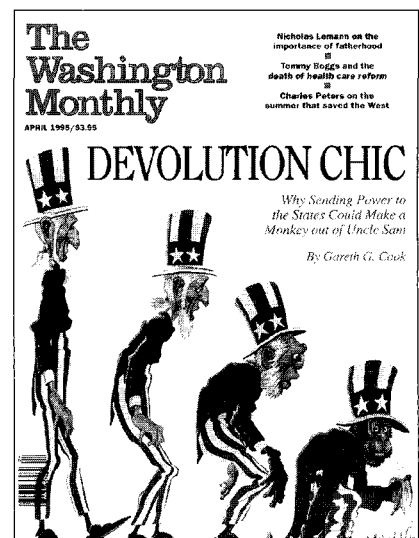
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“... holds up a deadly accurate mirror to the Washington political culture, exposing its hypocrisies, stupidities, and unexpected triumphs.” —*Chicago Tribune*



ing most Jews, have adopted English in place of their native tongues. One immigrant generation after another has given up its most meaningful possession so that its children may take advantage of the land of opportunity. Language is the key to the benefits of citizenship, since only through a common language can a country hope to offer an equal chance of education at the highest level. The proof of this formula's success can be found among the grandchildren of immigrants who feel so much at home in America that they can afford to complain of the cultural sacrifices their ancestors were "required" to make.

Yiddish in America began as a great success story. The over 2.5 million Yiddish-speaking Jews who came to the United States as part of the massive immigration from Europe at the turn of the twentieth century concentrated so densely on the Lower East Side of New York that at first they seemed to constitute an independent island. Yiddish, the vernacular language of European Jewry that had developed over almost 1,000 years, was by then producing not only a rich folk culture but a fast-growing literature, theater and press. Dozens of Yiddish writers began or ended their careers on the Lower East Side. (The funeral of Sholem Aleichem on May 15, 1916, with some 150,000 people lining the route, is said to be the largest that had ever been held in New York City, and his will was read into the Congressional Record.) Many writers and poets held down paying jobs on one of the five competing Yiddish dailies while pursuing the higher calling of literature in their spare time. An actress could join one of a dozen Yiddish theater companies or cross over to the English stage (as Molly Picon did) when her command of the local language improved enough. For several decades Yiddish culture gave the illusion of incorporating all of Jewishness, even for those who worked on the Sabbath and defied Jewish dietary laws by eating pork. Secular Jews claimed that *Yidishe verter* (Yiddish words) embodied *yidishe vertn* (Jewish values).

Yet the American immigrant group that produced this rich culture was also the quickest to abandon its language. Sent to public schools, the children of Yiddish-speakers adopted English. Most of them realized that their parents did not expect them to follow any special code of Jewish law, and they saw no reason to speak a language that separated them from other Americans whose customs and observances they now shared. Moreover, once the emphasis on Jewish learning was redirected toward an *American* education, Jewish children found Yiddish unnecessary or, worse, such an embarrassing reminder of immigrant poverty that they based a whole entertainment industry on the comedy of leaving it behind.

The rapid decline of Yiddish in America may represent an extreme case of acculturation. American Jews lacked some of the usual incentives for continuing to speak their native tongue. When the Jews of Europe were annihilated in World War II, American Jews were left without a linguistic homeland to revisit; unlike Ital-

ians or Greeks, they could not look forward to speaking the language of the old country with their relatives in Europe. At the same time, the spontaneous reclamation of Hebrew as the national language of Israel seemed to consign Yiddish to a marginal role in that new society. Both anti-Jewishness and the instincts of adaptation that Jews had developed through centuries of political dependency accelerated the American Jewish immigrants' appropriation of English so that most children of Yiddish readers—and even of some Yiddish writers—could no longer read the books in their parents' library. Aaron Lansky established the National Yiddish Book Center to rescue the hundreds of thousands of Yiddish books that might otherwise have been consigned to the trash. If this constitutes a revival, how would you describe a linguistic decline?

Language is the expressive instrument of a community that is sufficiently separate to sustain a separate language. Jews could only effect a Yiddish revival today if they were prepared to "de-assimilate" enough to regenerate their own language. Having reaped the benefits of English, they are not likely to conduct this experiment in reverse. And they are not alone. In Brooklyn, the Bushwick Parents' Organization has recently gone to court to oppose the imposed bilingual Spanish-English education of Hispanics in the local public schools, arguing that it leaves their children badly disadvantaged when they graduate. Most of the turn-of-the-century Jews would have protested, too, had the public schools tried to educate their children in Yiddish instead of preparing them for the level playing field of English. The imagined Yiddish revival only seems so benign because it ignores both the requirements and the consequences of linguistic separatism.

North of the American border in the Canadian province of Quebec, the government representing the French Canadian majority recently passed a law forbidding all English signs—on storefronts, restaurants, advertisements—lest the French language be overrun by the dominant English of the continent. With the decline of Roman Catholicism as the unifying force in Quebec society, French Canadians made language the sign of their determination to remain separate, just as in Europe not long ago the rapid decline of religious authority opened the way for a nationalist politics based on opposition to "the other." Last October, the people of Quebec defeated a proposal that would have split Quebec off from the rest of Canada; the vote was so close that separatists may soon be tempted to push for another referendum. But, even if they don't succeed, Quebec's policies on language remind us what the Europeanization of the continent may look like. In this scenario, English, the guarantor of maximal freedom and socioeconomic mobility, is targeted as the spoiler of other national identities.

There is also a third model of linguistic autonomy, one that falls short of political separatism while trying to remain socioeconomically competitive. Certain religious groups in America maintain a way of life that is so

precious to them in its distinctiveness that they voluntarily segregate themselves from the rest of the country in order to preserve it. Thus, for example, Yiddish still flourishes as the spoken language of so-called "ultra-orthodox" Jews who live apart in order to safeguard what sets them apart. These Jews speak Yiddish for the same reasons the language came into being in the first place, as the expression and guarantor of their religious civilization. Their European Jewish language and their traditional clothing help them resist the centripetal attraction of a society much friendlier—and hence more seductive—than Europe's.

The various Hasidic communities, clustered around their dynastic rabbinic leaders in urban or suburban enclaves, have no particular interest in the preservation of the Yiddish language as such: secular Yiddish culture is as suspect to them as any other branch of secular culture, probably more so since the apparent familiarity of the language might better camouflage the heretical content of what is written in it. Members of these communities are devoted to Jewish Law, not language; they study and pray in Hebrew, using Yiddish translations when necessary, and speak English when they have to communicate with Gentiles and other Jews. For these observant Jews, making language into an ideology would constitute a form of idolatry. Language becomes an end in itself only as a poor substitute for God.

For all the talk of its revival, Yiddish actually has only a handful of trained scholars who are capable of translating, editing, teaching and interpreting its vast and varied accumulated heritage; it can claim even fewer creative artists sufficiently at home in the language to renew its performance repertoire. For any revived interest in immigrant languages to bear fruit, sentiment would have to yield to programs of formal and serious study, and serious study of any culture usually challenges the rosy images on which much of the sentiment is based. What is more, the study of a culture is not necessarily limited to its own members. Among the great joys of teaching a "native" culture under university auspices is the presence of students who are not its native heirs and whose curiosity derives from sources other than "ethnic pride."

America's linguistic homogeneity has demanded the sacrifice of immigrant languages, and it may be only natural that descendants who already enjoy all the benefits of English should look back with longing to the greater ethnic diversity of original immigrant neighborhoods. They may imagine a new America with European-style linguistic diversity. But before generating such fantasies of ethnic language revivals—and more programmatic initiatives to keep the children of Hispanics and other minorities speaking "their own" languages—we should recall what many millions of immigrants instinctively grasped: that English is the most fundamental pathway to America's equal opportunity.

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Budget slugfest redux.

CAP GAINS

By Matthew Miller

On April 26, when the president finally signed a spending compromise to fund government operations for the remaining half of fiscal year 1996, Washington collapsed in a mixture of exhaustion and relief. Yet, just when you thought the shutdowns and standoffs were over, that dread federal budget is back! Thanks to last year's endless cat fight, the clash over fiscal 1997 (which begins October 1) is already behind schedule in Congress. With Republicans set this month to issue updated blueprints for balancing the budget by 2002, it's hang-on-to-your-hats time once more.

Unlike last year, though, expectations are low—it's a campaign season, after all. The conventional wisdom is that, despite professions of interest from Bob Dole and the White House and yeoman efforts by centrists in both parties, chances for a multi-year deal that would reform entitlements and balance the budget—goals that eluded negotiators last time—are nil. Dole, it's said, would rather stage a few politically juicy, albeit doomed, votes on the balanced budget amendment than give the president a deal that defuses the issue. And, although last year's marathon Oval Office talks produced some agreements, the questions that divide the parties—should Medicaid and welfare remain federal guarantees, for example, or the elderly be asked to give up some Medicare subsidies—are either matters of conviction so genuine or campaign fodder so potent they can never be resolved.

Well, never say never. There's a deal lurking under our noses that, while imperfect, represents our last, best hope for progress before the descent into demagoguery come Labor Day. It could spare us the specter of government shutdown as we head to the polls and avoid another year of deadlock. Called an "entitlement cap," it would limit the annual growth of the near-trillion dollars in Medicare, Social Security and related "autopilot" programs that is likely to bankrupt us when the baby-boomers retire. Legislating the dimensions of such a cap now, without specifying exactly how they'll achieve the required savings, leaves both sides free to hurl campaign spitballs while knowing they've defined responsible terms of debate for 1997, when the real work resumes. Most deliciously, the deal is actually the brainchild and vindication of everyone's favorite whipping boy: former Bush administration Budget Director Richard Darman.

To fiscal fetishists this will come as no surprise, since Darman has in fact been ruling American government from exile since 1992. It took me a year in the bowels of the Clinton budget office to fully appreciate this. President Clinton, naturally, figured it out faster. I take as my text page 161 of Bob Woodward's *The Agenda*, where economic aide Gene Sperling is explaining to the president in April 1993 that his cherished public investment agenda, the *raison d'être* of Clinton's candidacy, has just been gutted—by his fellow Democrats. They've extended the so-called "discretionary spending caps" created by Darman as part of the 1990 deal best remembered for George Bush's betrayal of his own lips on taxes. The bottom line? After Clinton campaigned for a fresh \$50 billion a year to rebuild American infrastructure, promote lifelong learning and more, the House has given him \$7 billion for his first two years combined. Let's listen in:

The president began to yell and shout questions. How? Why? When? ... Slamming his fist down on the end of his chair, Clinton let loose a torrent of rage and frustration. He said he felt blindsided. This was totally inconsistent with what he had been told. Why hadn't they ever had a serious discussion about the caps? Day after day, in dozens of hours in the Roosevelt Room going over the smallest programs and most trivial details, there had been no meeting, no discussion about the caps? The president turned red in the face. Why didn't they tell me? he asked.

The Darman caps that Clinton blamed for morphing him into an "Eisenhower Republican" first emerged in mid-1990, when soaring deficit forecasts and skittish markets prompted negotiations between the Bush administration and the congressional leadership at Andrews Air Force Base. Newt Gingrich was then just a sulky and recalcitrant backbencher, poised to grandstand (successfully, as it turned out) over any deal that included taxes. The real players in the room were Darman and Democratic Senate titan Robert Byrd.

Darman came to the table frustrated by the failure of the 1985 Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act to deliver its intended results. That law had set a series of declining annual deficit targets that were routinely missed, embarrassingly eased and ultimately scrapped. From the public's point of view, this toothless scheme plus our tide of debt proved that Washington was out of control. For deficit hawks, however, Gramm-Rudman's lesson was subtler: targeting lower deficit numbers in the first place was a mistake. Since this sounds like—but isn't—the usual brand of cowardice, suspend disbelief for a moment to walk in your congressman's shoes.

If you're an elected official, the problem with being accountable for a deficit number is that any year's actual deficit is largely out of your control. An unexpected down-tick in economic growth, for example, which lowers tax revenue and raises costs for unemployment and other safety-net expenses, can easily swing the deficit \$50 billion or more, swamping whatever spending or tax changes seemed to suffice just six months earlier. The result, as hawks like Darman had

learned by 1990, was to put politicians in a lose-lose situation. They'd anger constituents with votes to cut spending or raise taxes, only to see a dip in the economy (or an S&L bailout) make them look like idiots when they missed the deficit target by a mile. Since most members of Congress weren't profiles in courage to start with, the prospect of being repeatedly asked to cast tough votes for nothing threatened to kill the institution's appetite for deficit reduction altogether. Darman knew he had to find a better way. His answer was to target spending levels instead, which were basically within congressional control.

Out at Andrews, Darman therefore pushed for caps on "discretionary" spending—that third of the budget that gets appropriated annually and that includes most of what we think of as government, from the Pentagon to national parks to the FBI. Byrd, for his part, was mainly interested in more domestic spending, so that he could fund, among other things, the repaving of West Virginia. So they made a deal. Darman agreed to give Byrd billions in extra domestic spending for the initial years of the five-year agreement in exchange for annual spending caps that would flatten out thereafter. Byrd figured he'd take the money and run, since in all likelihood Democrats could revisit the deal before the caps began to bite. Darman, however, wagered that once the caps were enacted they would endure; the new political incentives they created would make it impossible for anyone to "repeal" or "bust" existing spending caps.

The discretionary caps worked. Indeed, they became our most reliable form of budget discipline, with Clinton's experience serving as the ultimate proof. In an irony that vindicated Darman's political judgment, it was Minnesota Democrat and House Budget Committee Chairman Martin Sabo who rebuffed Clinton in 1993, telling White House people they were nuts if they thought Democrats could vote to raise the discretionary caps to accommodate Clinton's big new investments.

The enduring power of Darman's discretionary caps explains much of last year's budget war as well. In ways that even Darman probably didn't anticipate, lowering and then extending these caps (for, say, seven years) became the easiest political way to legislate big spending cuts. Why? Because simply promising (in law) to set spending at a level below what had previously been planned—without detailing which programs you'd cut, or by how much, year by year—was enough to get the Congressional Budget Office to pronounce your cuts "real." Little wonder, then, that by last Christmas both parties were happy (though unwise) to put the burden of half their balanced-budget cuts on the domestic discretionary spending that makes up just 15 percent of the budget.

By late April of this year, after thirteen stopgap spending bills, two government shutdowns and fifty hours of talks, all hopes of a grand bargain on a balanced budget were dashed. The agreement struck between the White House and Congress on the current year's (fiscal 1996) appropriations thus ratified this misguided strategy of Cutting Discretionary First. It sliced more than \$20 bil-

lion, or nearly 10 percent, from domestic discretionary spending, with an unusually low quotient of smoke and mirrors. The GOP could boast fairly of a significant accomplishment. They bought it largely by resuscitating, as planned, a handful of presidential initiatives (National Service, Goals 2000) they'd slated for extinction. At a few hundred million dollars each, these hostages were pocket change compared to the cuts they made possible in larger domestic programs.

In the long term, however, this GOP "victory" on discretionary spending is illusory. This month, Republicans will issue updated plans that cover fiscal years 1997 through 2002. If, as expected, the GOP freezes discretionary spending at its new lower levels and exempts defense from any cuts, by 2002 this will mean inflation-adjusted cuts of up to one-third in such areas as basic research, student aid, environmental protection, crime-fighting, low-income housing and more. Many Republicans privately admit these cuts are neither politically sustainable nor desirable as policy. It's easy to see why, given that domestic discretionary spending is already on a long-term decline, heading from 5 percent of GDP in the late 1970s toward less than 3 percent by century's end. Our real problems come from entitlements like Medicare, where the White House and Congress couldn't reach agreement this year.

Which brings us to the present and to Richard Darman's unfinished agenda. Capping discretionary spending was never Darman's full vision. The 1990 deal established a "pay-as-you-go" rule to assure that no *new* entitlements or tax reductions could be enacted without simultaneously offsetting their cost. But that still left the 800-pound gorilla uncaged: the existing entitlement juggernauts, led by Medicare and Medicaid, which have soared 12 percent annually since 1980 and are expected to grow another 9 percent yearly between now and 2006. Darman's plan was to build on the 1990 measures with an enforceable cap on the growth of these programs. In the February 1992 budget, for example, he called for a cap that would limit their growth to a rate that accommodated both the increased number of beneficiaries and inflation, along with an extra cash "cushion" that would be phased out over several years.

"Good government" types—including me, for years—complained that such vague entitlement caps were a cop out, since they put off public discussion of the controversial policies needed to meet them and would thus prove unsustainable when the rubber met the road. Yet, you had to admit, those discretionary caps had changed the political incentives and were working, even a little too well. And it's not as if politicians were falling all over each other to discuss the need for higher Medicare premiums or fewer overpaid medical specialists, anyway.

That's when I had my epiphany. It dawned on me that if you posited a world that might never see presidential leadership on these dicey choices—not a bad assumption for Darman to make, since he'd been a handmaiden to trillions in presidential evasion—then

his entitlement cap was the most responsible and cleverest way to go. It just might set in motion a process that would force the political system to control health care costs against its will. What was there, really, to lose?

Darman's elitist philosophy of governance thus stands in sharp contrast to the direction in which Newt Gingrich, that brat in the back at Andrews Air Force Base, has taken his party. In this Congress, Gingrich has had his troops put their Medicare cards on the table and take their lumps. He believes Republicans can survive the Democrats' coming demagoguery and make voters understand that the GOP would increase Medicare spending while slowing its growth. In Richard Darman's world, this hope for public understanding informed by candid leadership is naïve—at least when it comes to asking the middle class to give up benefits or pay more taxes, our two inalterable destinies.

I've always hoped the Gingrich view on this question (which may be the only way in which he's really "revolutionary") was right. But I'm not sure I'd bet the country on it. In any event, we'll have a laboratory test of the proposition soon enough. If the GOP gets blown away thanks to Medicare, you can be sure we won't see further frontal attacks on the health cost spiral anytime soon.

Thus the case for the cap. Since Darman's day, it's been trotted out in various forms by Democrats Leon Panetta, Sam Nunn, John Spratt and Charlie Stenholm; and Republicans Pete Domenici and Dick Armey, too. With the deficit dropping to \$140 billion this year (for which Clinton deserves credit), and both sides having left last winter's budget talks much closer on the numbers than the rhetoric suggests, it would be a cinch to craft a cap formula that got us to balance even *before* 2002. The question isn't whether an entitlement cap is the best thing for the country. It's whether it's the best thing that could actually get done this year. There's no chance we'll get a deal based on real policy consensus; if we could, there'd be no need for an election. But Dole and Clinton could agree on a cap. It would give GOP freshmen a gloss of achievement to take to the stump, a partial shield for the Medicare death march they're facing. Democrats, meanwhile, could bargain for a sensible hike in the discretionary caps as the price of capping the stuff that really matters. Yes, there are technical worries galore and an argument that we may as well just write this year off and come back in 1997. But there's always a chance that after the voters speak neither party will have the stomach to do What Must Be Done. Why not take out some bipartisan insurance that points whoever wins in the right direction, just in case?

In other words, maybe it's time we did Richard Darman's deal, just in case Richard Darman is right about democracy. The exiled budget maestro, of course, isn't talking. He's said barely a word since the 1992 election. Nixon once said famously that we were all Keynesians now. On the budget, if we can't find presidents or candidates willing to lead honestly, we'd better all be Darmanites. •

THE BIG EAST

By Jacob Heilbrunn

In the past few weeks, the Clinton administration has suffered two foreign policy humiliations. The first was Syrian President Hafez al-Assad's refusal to meet with Warren Christopher. The second, and more ominous, was Russian President Boris Yeltsin's summit in Beijing. Earlier in the week, President Clinton had traveled to Moscow to extol what his administration calls a "strategic partnership" with Russia and to help stave off Yeltsin's anti-Western communist opposition. Clinton's reward? Yeltsin visits China to lay the groundwork for an anti-Western alliance with the Chinese that the two sides term a "strategic partnership."

Though the Clinton administration clings to the belief that the struggle in Russia is between communists and ex-communists, it has become increasingly difficult to discern any substantive differences between the two camps, particularly in the realm of foreign policy. Like Perseus waving the head of Medusa, Yeltsin has brandished the specter of a hard-line communist takeover, while at the same time pursuing communistic policies with the benison of the United States and its Western allies. The result has been the steady reconstruction of the Russian, not the Soviet, empire.

Like the old Romanov empire, the new colossus emerging under Yeltsin is based primarily in the East. With an independent Ukraine and the loss of the Central European satellite states, westward expansion is not in the cards. The Baltic states represent a new imperial Russia's furthest Western claims, while Central Asia, China and the Middle East form the core of its aspirations. Russia's sheer size, its natural resources and enormous army mean that its turn eastward has profound implications not only for its immediate neighbors, but also for the United States. Though the U.S. is in an exceptionally advantageous position to counter the Russian drive to the Far East, it must first acknowledge the recrudescence of the Kremlin's imperial ambitions.

With the end of the cold war and the disintegration of the Soviet empire, the center of gravity in Europe has been thrust back eastwards. During the cold war, Russia, like the United States, was pulled into the center of Europe through the collapse of Germany. But the presence of both superpowers in the middle of Europe was a historical aberration. Central Europe has again become the center of Europe, and Russia has been

pushed to the periphery of the continent. The current Russian position thus marks a return to the former dreams of Russian imperialists for a landward expansion into Central Asia, China and the Far East—one that brought it into conflict with the United States at the turn of the century, just as it is bound to do today.

Like the United States, Russia expanded along a west-east axis. "Asia," as Dostoyevsky said, "is like the then-undiscovered America. With our aspiration for Asia, our spirit and forces will be regenerated." By the turn of the century, a Russian racial doctrine of manifest destiny had emerged to be picked up and scrutinized by such high priests of imperialism as the British geographer Sir Halford Mackinder. In an address before the Royal Geographic Society in 1904, Mackinder famously enunciated the lineaments of a proto-containment policy of Russia in which he depicted Eurasia as the future "empire of the world."

There is an intimate link between the current reconsolidation of the Russian empire and the nineteenth-century notion of Eurasia. In a move that marks a new phase in its foreign policy, Russia is again focusing its acquisitive attentions on the Central Asian states. Just after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Moscow turned its back on Central Asia as well as on the rogue Middle Eastern states it had traditionally supported. By March 1992, though, liberals such as then-state councillor for political affairs Sergei Stankevich had begun espousing renewed imperial ambitions. In an essay reprinted in *The National Interest*, Stankevich ruminated that Russia should back away from the West and discover a new "mission" abroad as a Eurasian power that recognized that "our state emerged and grew strong as a unique historical and cultural amalgam of Slav and Turkic, Orthodox and Muslim components."

The first sign of this new aggressiveness came in Chechnya. As the bridgehead to the Transcaucasian regions, Chechnya is strategically vital to Russia since it controls access to both the Black and Caspian seas. In addition, oil and gas pipelines to Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan run through the Chechen republic. The effect of the bungled Chechen war has been to accelerate the renationalization and militarization of Russian foreign policy. In part because the Russian military supported Yeltsin during the 1993 coup against him, it

has been given *carte blanche* in Chechnya. Defense Minister Pavel Grachev has ignored Yeltsin's occasional stabs at restraining the army—the decision to level Grozny was reportedly offered as a birthday present to Grachev at a drunken party in his honor—and the official army newspaper even carries a map of the old Soviet empire on its first page. Though Yeltsin can hardly be said to have met with success in subduing Chechnya, he has been determined to hunker down there.

As early as 1993, Yeltsin and then-Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev began to argue that Central Asia formed a vital Russian interest and that Russia, in Kozyrev's words, was the only power capable of "separating" combatants in the region. And, though the West never gave its official imprimatur to Yeltsin's meddling in Central Asia, it has certainly maintained a discreet silence. One aim of the Russian military has been to retain its military bases in the Central Asian republics. In his 1995 annual report to the Duma, Yeltsin made it plain that Russia might invade other areas of Central Asia to impose order, warning that it might confront "armed conflicts breaking out in Russia and on its borders, on the territory of the former Soviet Union because of aggressive nationalism and religious extremism." Since Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan are all scenes of armed conflict, there is plenty of opportunity for Russia to carry out the threat.

Already Russia claims residual rights in the energy reserves of the Caspian Sea and is expanding its military presence. Defense Minister Grachev has called for opening twenty-eight new Russian bases in the CIS, and Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov has developed plans for increased political, military and economic integration under Russian leadership.

Russia has also taken great pains to ensure that the commonwealth states remain internally divided, fomenting violence in Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia. It continues, for example, to bomb Tajik opposition bases in Afghanistan. As Andrei Nikolaev, commander of the Russian border guards, has observed: "What we are doing in Tajikistan is protecting our strategic interests. The Russian border guards' presence ... confirm the existence of our vital interests in Central Asia. ... We make no pretenses that we are interested in cotton, rare metals and sources of energy." In Azerbaijan, Russia has been no less avid in pursuing what it perceives as its interests. It has gone from supporting Armenian forces to aiding Azerbaijani forces in order to perpetuate the conflict there. There have even been rumors that the Kremlin tried to instigate a coup against Azerbaijani President Gaidar Aliyev after he signed a deal with a British-led oil consortium last fall.

In Georgia, meanwhile, Russia has followed the same tactic of *divide et impera*. Initially, Russia assisted Abkhaz separatists in 1993, then, once Georgia applied for admission to the Commonwealth of Independent

States, began to back President Eduard Shevardnadze. Throughout, however, Moscow has never totally turned on the separatists, holding them in reserve should Shevardnadze consider reneging on Georgian membership in the CIS.

Russia's main official justification for its bullying of the CIS states is its apprehension about Turkey—Moscow's chief competitor as a Eurasian power. Ankara has sponsored a peace plan for Nagorno-Karabakh and sought to arrange an oil pipeline from Central Asia to Turkey while Russia has insisted that all oil shipments be exported through the port of Novorossisk. However hypertrophied Russia's fear of an anti-Russian Islamic bloc may appear, Moscow views Turkey as a prime threat to its interests in both Central Asia and in the Balkans. The two powers have fallen out over Turkish assistance to the Chechen rebels and Russian support for the Kurds, among other matters.

The most dramatic shift triggered by the rise of Turkey, however, has been a rapprochement between Iran and Russia. For Iran, Russia is both a potential anti-Western bulwark and a supplier of arms, while Turkey stands as a threat to its own security and a source of support for anti-Iranian leaders in Central Asia. Above all, Iran believes that Turkey is a pawn of the U.S., which seeks to isolate it. For Russia, meanwhile, Iran provides an inroad into the Islamic world, a strategic partner to maintain a global foreign policy and a valuable economic partner that could counterbalance a Turkish-led Muslim world. Interestingly, Moscow does not seem to fear Iranian encroachments into Central Asia, and, indeed, there are few signs that Tehran has effectively whipped up pro-Islamic sentiment even in fundamentalist-leaning republics such as Uzbekistan.

Relations between Russia and Iran first began to blossom in February 1989 when Shevardnadze, in his capacity as foreign minister of the Soviet Union, met with the Ayatollah Khomeini. "The meeting put the ayatollah's seal of approval on expanded ties between Tehran and Moscow," notes Iran expert Shireen Hunter in *Transition's* December 29, 1995, issue, "so that in the future no one in the Iranian leadership could challenge the wisdom of having good relations with Moscow." By June 1989 Iran had signed a host of weapons agreements with Moscow. Since then, contacts have grown steadily warmer. In 1991, Russia arranged a deal to sell three Kilo-class attack submarines to Iran, and Russian specialists are now helping Iran construct the \$1 billion Bushehr nuclear power plant. The sentiments underlying this chumminess were captured by Pavel Felgengauer in the Moscow weekly *Sevodnya*. In an article titled "THE POLITICAL ELITE WILL NOT ALLOW THE PRESIDENT TO YIELD TO PRESSURE FROM THE WEST," Felgengauer wrote, "Cooperation with Iran is more than just a question of money and orders for the Russian atomic industry. Today, a hostile Tehran could cause a great deal of unpleasantness for Russia in the northern Caucasus and in Tajikistan. ... On the other hand, a

friendly Iran could become an important strategic ally in the future."

Nor is Iran the only Middle East power with which Russia is cultivating new ties. After a lull during the Gulf war, it has resumed supplying arms to Libya. Russia's attempt to reach out to these Middle East countries is not a cause for panic, but it does suggest that it won't exactly be honoring the preferences of the U.S. in the region. What's more, Russian scientists are assisting North Korea in building a ballistic missile institute. And Russia continues to deliver cruise missiles, fighter planes, missile guidance systems and technical expertise to China. In short, Moscow, in reverting to the old Soviet pattern of supporting regimes hostile to the U.S. and Western Europe, has once again become an antidemocratic arsenal.

The supporters of this agenda cover the political spectrum, from Zyuganov to Zhirinovskiy to Yeltsin. The communists see a Russia menaced by Western democracy and market economics, one that should restore its ties to anti-Western Third World radical states, build up its military and reject all arms control treaties. Zhirinovskiy's nationalists insist on Russia's great-power role and denounce attempts to "dictate" Russian foreign policy, which, they argue, should properly be focused on Asia. (In the fascist weekly *Zavtra*, various writers have proselytized for a new "Eurasian Federation"; Zhirinovskiy's party, meanwhile, has called for a Russian sphere of influence comprised of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan.) The daily newspaper *Izvestia* has noted that all of the political parties champion an assertive Russia and that "no one dares to enclose the word 'patriot' in sarcastic quotation marks, as was done three or four years ago."

The alacrity with which Yeltsin and his camarilla have adopted these anti-Western policies suggests the depth of animosity toward the United States in Russia. Far from being a mere attempt to palliate nationalist voters, Yeltsin's new course suggests a return to the traditional tenets of Russian imperialism. Yeltsin and his new foreign minister, Yevgeny Primakov, have made no secret of their opposition to the United States as the leading superpower. In March, Primakov said in an interview with *Izvestia* that "during the transition from a bipolar to a multipolar world, Russia must play the role of a counterbalance to the negative trends that are manifesting themselves in international affairs. During this transition period, not all of the power centers that constitute this multipolarity have yet emerged. And some people are trying to achieve dominance in this situation." Since then, Russia has stepped up its opposition to the expansion of NATO, refused to endorse the START II arms-control treaty, made threatening noises about the future of the Baltic states and coozied up to China.

The Clinton administration still doesn't get it. Far from cautioning Yeltsin about his visit to China, Clinton and Strobe Talbott actually encouraged him to travel to

Beijing in the misguided hope that the Russian leader might persuade China to sign a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty. The document they ended up signing on that visit was a joint statement with the Chinese that decried "hegemonism, power politics," and "interference in the internal affairs of other countries under various pretexts." Already much of the Russian political class speaks with envy of the Chinese model of development, but what threatens to develop in Russia is authoritarianism without economic progress. It may be that Russia cannot afford great-power status, but affordability is not necessarily an impediment to empire. In fact, it is precisely Russia's economic debility that is prompting it to reach into the Central Asian republics to reassert control over rich oil reserves.

The administration is proceeding on the assumption, of course, that Yeltsin's downfall would lead to something worse for the U.S. But a Zyuganov victory in the June 16 presidential elections would lead to a domestic political crackdown and a change in rhetoric—not a substantive hardening of foreign policy. It might not even be the triumphant Zyuganov engineering the crackdown; it might well be Yeltsin, who could declare the elections invalid. In that case, the scales would be tipped by the Russian army, but no one can say with much confidence which way it would tip them. By tying their fortunes to Yeltsin, the Clintonites have tied their own hands.

Ironically, though, the geopolitical position of the United States could not be more propitious. Russia's turn back to the East is a product of our victory in the cold war. As it struggles to regain great-power status, Russia is taking the only route open to it. To be sure, Russia can still overrun the Baltic states—a possibility that should not be excluded. But by using Ukraine as a buffer, together with the Central European states, the United States and Europe can effectively choke off any Russian aspirations toward the West. To the East, the United States, while acknowledging that Russia has a right to some influence in the region, should not flinch from condemning Russian bellicosity (as it has so far refrained from doing), from using economic ties to Russia as a stick and from bolstering its Asian alliance system against the rise of Eurasia.

The Russia appeasers, of course, will object to this: "Why throw away potential Russia-America cooperation in East Asia—and perhaps in the Middle East, as well—in order to indulge the desires for vengeance of Poles and Ukrainians and the hopes of former Cold Warriors for a revival of the anti-Soviet crusade?" asks Michael Lind in a provocative essay in the April 28 *Washington Post*. But the choice is not between a cold war or cooperation, and Russia is in no mood to cooperate with the United States. Instead, Russia is moving to become junior partner to China in its move against the West. As the dominant power, the United States should be able to constrain Russian ambitions relatively easily. It will have to begin by recognizing the tenacity of those ambitions. •

PARTY HEARTY

By Martin Malia

As Russia approaches its two-round presidential elections in June, apprehension mounts about the possible victory of Gennadi Zyuganov's revived Communists. If they win, the fearful say, they will move to restore the Soviet Union and reinstate the old command economy. Others claim, reassuringly, that though this might be the Communists' intention, five years of free-market reforms have made a return to the past impossible. Still others say they won't even get a chance to try because, at the moment of truth, a majority will prefer the lesser evil, a tarnished and unreliable Boris Yeltsin. And congenital pessimists predict that "eternal Russia," whether under the greater or the lesser evil, will return to its time-honored tendency toward authoritarianism at home and expansionism abroad.

Some of these Cassandras, such as Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski and, more significantly, Bob Dole, recommend a very hard line if Russia reverts to its alleged deeper nature. The Clinton administration, while still strongly supporting Yeltsin, has at last realized it must publicly criticize the Chechnya war. And others, such as William Safire, are recommending support for the liberal economist Grigory Yavlinsky as a "third way" out of our policy dilemma.

To assess what will be, regardless of June's outcome, a difficult future for Russia, we should first recognize that the roots of its current dilemma lie not in some unchanging national essence, but quite precisely in the legacy of Communism. Russia's plight presents only a more severe case of the syndrome general to all the countries of the former Soviet bloc, in which five years after Communism's fall, recycled Communists are back in power almost everywhere.

This untoward turn, defying the "transition to democracy" once neatly mapped out by Western social scientists and bankers alike, usually receives a comparably neat explanation: the market plunge proved unexpectedly painful for the populations of the East, which therefore turned to modernized Communists offering a broad "safety net." This is indeed part of the explanation, but much more important is the struc-

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tural legacy of Communism itself.

To recall the basic historical facts: a mere five or six years ago, Communist parties owned and managed everything in the former Soviet bloc, and almost everyone with talent or ambition worked for them. Under such circumstances, strong democratic forces could not develop; the only opposition consisted of marginal "dissident" intellectuals (mutely backed by a fringe of closet counterparts inside the party). Communism was not overthrown by struggling masses yearning to breathe free. The system simply caved in under the accumulated weight of its economic incompetencies and unfulfilled ideological promises; and, amid the collapse, the majority of party cadres abandoned the system without a real fight in order to find a niche in the new order.

Into the void stepped the relatively small group of convinced democrats freed up by glasnost. For the next couple of years, these "reformers"—Solidarity in Poland, Yeltsin and former Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar in Russia—shunted aside the old party cadres to launch the transition to the market and constitutional politics.

Many of the old party hands adapted successfully to the new order, whether in politics, the media, banking or privatized industry. In particular, the *syroviki*, or managers dealing in the extraction of raw materials—oil, gas, timber and minerals—found plenty of foreign markets for their products, and so became convinced supporters of the market and foes of protectionism. The former Soviet minister for natural gas and present Russian prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, is the most prominent of this group.

But other old party hands were less fortunate. Such were the *promyshlenniki*, or managers of archaic manufacturing enterprises whose products were not competitive in the international market. This group was hostile to the market and supportive of state subsidies for industry, of wage and price controls and of protectionism. An even greater Soviet conservatism characterizes the enormous and hopelessly inefficient kolkhoz system in agriculture, which any number of presidential reform decrees has yet to succeed in replacing with private farmers.

And, finally, there were the full-time party workers.

Some of these, such as the military industrialist turned Yeltsin ally Arkady Volsky or Yeltsin's deputy, Oleg Soskovets, successfully converted to "democratic" politics. But others, usually from lower levels of the *apparat* or from the provinces, were never reconciled to their loss of political-administrative power, and they resented the "opportunists" who turned coat in 1991. The low-level Central Committee functionary Zyuganov is of this ilk, as is recently elected Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski.

Yet, even in the brief period of reformist government, Eastern Europe's loyalist losers never lost that much power; they never ceased to function in an old Red network of party complicities and connections. Indeed, the monolithic Leninist structures of the party at the end had become simply the trade union of the people in power. So when the reformers' policies inevitably caused pain, the old party trade union came out of the woodwork to recoup its lost authority.

In Central Europe these former Communists call themselves social democrats. But this is a misnomer: social democrats have convictions; the Central European ex-Communists are cynics whose only ambition is to run things as they did before 1989—though in deference to international opinion they do not seek restoration of full socialism.

In Russia, the Communists are not cynics; rather, they are sincere, if primitive, Soviet (not Russian) nationalists. They are embittered Soviet traditionalists who genuinely believe that Communism's statist economic methods brought Russia victory in World War II and made it a superpower; and that a return to these methods would recreate the Union and restore international greatness. And so, out of conservatism, they are determined not just to re-establish their trade-union power, but to turn the economic and cultural clock as far back as they can. These characteristics distinguish them from the more pragmatic authors of the "velvet restoration" (as Polish dissident Adam Michnik calls it) that has already taken place in Central Europe.

Russia's revived Communists do not understand why the Soviet system failed or even that it failed at all. Instead, they attribute the Soviet collapse to the treason of evil forces within Russia and the machinations of Western intelligence. They truly believe their own rhetoric about the superiority of Soviet methods or at least about their suitability for Russia.

A Communist restoration in Russia would hardly be "velvet." Instead we can expect a determined effort to renationalize key industries, especially those with a military potential; a program of subsidies to big industry, wage and price controls, protectionism and, of course, inflation; an attempt to punish the "profiteers" and "traitors" of the democratic interregnum and along with this the re-establishment of censorship over the media; and, finally, a combination of political and economic pressure aimed at bringing as much of the old Union as possible back into some sort of fusion with Russia. But most

of all we can expect that the pursuit of these policies would produce a monumental mess—and ultimately a retreat from the restorationist program.

For bitterness and nostalgia are not enough to coerce a now fragmented and pluralistic Russia into a neo-Soviet mold. Such a feat would require Leninist ideological zeal, and the neo-Communists no longer have it. Moreover, even if Zyuganov's cohorts don't realize that the Soviet system failed, the majority of the Russian population does. While the Communists enjoy the hard-core support of perhaps a third of the electorate, the additional voters they would need to defeat Yeltsin, while frustrated with democracy and hungry for stability, do not want to return to the old ways.

Furthermore, even though many in the military would no doubt like a "strong" government, the armed forces are so demoralized and ineffective—as Russia's humiliating defeats in Chechnya demonstrate—that they could hardly serve as an instrument of coercion. And there is ever so much to coerce. Russia's regions, from St. Petersburg to Tatarstan on the Volga on to Vladivostok, are increasingly autonomous politically and economically. The major republics of the former USSR are determined to resist reunion. As opinion surveys consistently show, Russians, though often nostalgic about the lost Union and concerned about their 25 million compatriots in the "near abroad," are in no mood to make sacrifices to get either back. Surveys also show that people under 35, especially those in the cities who began their careers not in the *apparat* but in business, are largely resistant to the neo-Communists' evocation of imperial glory.

There is still another bar to real restoration: although Russia remains one of the world's two major nuclear powers, in all other respects it is dependent on the outside world, not just for a chance at prosperity, but for economic survival. The dollar is virtually the national currency; the IMF and the World Bank are a surrogate Federal Reserve; and the export of raw materials and armaments is vital to minimal solvency. No Russian government, of whatever political hue, can return to the autarkic days of Sovietism and keep Russia afloat economically.

The most likely outcome, then, of a Communist restoration, is that, after an extended period of turmoil, those now under 35 will face reality and return the country to the "reformist" course that it has unevenly followed since 1991. But, in order to avoid such a costly detour, is it necessary now to endure the "lesser evil" represented by Yeltsin? The answer is, unfortunately, yes; for the much-touted Yavlinsky will not make it to the runoff set for early July. The oft-repeated axiom that the West should support the Russian reform "process," not any one "man," is fine in the abstract; but at any given moment the "process" and a specific leader are, in practice, indistinguishable.

The most interesting personnel question is: Who will be the ailing Yeltsin's prime minister and interim successor? And on this score the old pol may have a sur-

prise in store for us. Three of the lesser candidates—Yavlinsky, General Aleksandr Lebed and eye surgeon Svyatislav Fyodorov—have talked of a coalition “third force” in opposition to both Yeltsin and the Communists in which they would divvy up the presidency, the prime ministership and the Ministry of Defense. So far, they cannot agree on who would get the top spot. Yeltsin, however, is much better placed for similar horse trading.

To survive the first round of the election, he needs above all to drain votes from Zyuganov; to this end, he has adopted a nationalistic stance. To beat Zyuganov in the second round, however, he has to win back the liberals. So it is not inconceivable that he would buy the support of Yavlinsky, who is nothing if not ambitious, with an offer of the prime ministership and, in so doing, orient his next term toward the vacillating center.

As for those who suggest that authoritarian domestic forces will lead Russia to menace Central Europe once again, a coldly realistic appraisal of the country's international position suggests that for the foreseeable future it will remain a weak and dependent power. Russia has been a great power in only two periods of its history: from Peter the Great in the early 1700s to 1815 and from the victory at Stalingrad in 1943 to the 1980s. In both periods it was successful only because its meager human and material resources were mobilized to a cruel maximum by the coercive power of the state. In both cases, moreover, it sought to neutralize its poverty by appropriating Western methods and techniques, while at the same time avoiding political dependence on the West.

Under the old regime, an army with state-of-the-art technology but resting on peasant serfs conscripted for life defeated the declining powers of Sweden, Poland and Turkey to create the Russian empire in Europe. This empire became for a brief time the major power of the continent not because of its inherent strength, but because Napoleon foolishly lost the most modern military force of the day by intruding into Russia's vast expanse, temporarily creating a power vacuum as far west as Paris.

But when this same serf empire took on the industrialized powers of Britain and France in the Crimean War of 1854-1856 it lost pitifully. Thereafter, because of persistent backwardness, it lost uninterruptedly, in another Turkish war and in the Russo-Japanese war of 1905, before disintegrating completely in 1914-1917. Nonetheless, throughout most of this period, the world champion imperialists of modern history, the British, were in a permanent state of hysteria about the Russian bear advancing over the Himalayas to India.

Under the Soviet regime, once World War I and Lenin's Revolution had set the Russian economy back twenty-five years, Stalin achieved a mode of national mobilization unprecedented in Russia's or any other country's history. In order to compete in the “international class struggle,” Stalin waged a domestic “class

struggle” to collectivize the peasantry, thus “financing” the imitation of the blast furnaces of Pittsburgh and the auto (and tank) factories of Detroit (the same kind of imitative planning was later used for nuclear weapons). Stalin won the first round of this struggle, against Hitler, less because of the efficiency of his new socialism than because the Führer was foolish enough to follow Napoleon and lead his armies into Russia without weighing the risks. The Nazi defeat created another temporary power vacuum up to the Elbe.

But here the parallel with tsarist power stops; for socialism and anti-fascism's ideological aura gave Soviet Russia an imperial reach far beyond the range of the tsars, or even of its own armies. The socialist mystique brought its influence in the West in the form of Communist parties, fellow-traveling intellectuals and “peace movements,” and throughout the Third World with “wars of national liberation.”

But Russia's second, ideologically driven mobilization, also proved incapable of sustaining great-power status. For the strains of the next round of “international class war,” the cold war, proved to be more than the Soviet command economy could bear. Increasingly after 1970 Soviet performance could not match capitalism's level of productivity and technological innovation. This widening gap eroded the system's ideological legitimation, namely, the postulate of socialism's inherent economic superiority. The resulting loss of self-confidence led to perestroika's foredoomed effort to liberalize Communism without de-communizing it and so to the collapse of the whole system and of Russia's superpower pretensions.

Thus Russia is back at geopolitical square one: a poor power trying to modernize in the real world after the disaster of its caricature modernization in the surreal world of Soviet socialism. It is quite unlikely that in any foreseeable future Russia will have caught up with the West—or even with China—sufficiently to become a resurgent power capable of filling a vacuum in Central Europe. Nor would neo-Soviet nationalism act as a magnetic mystique abroad. Finally, even if by some extraordinary exertions Russia recovered the still poorer members of the late Union, this would not make it a significant threat. For at the end of the twentieth century international power is not constituted by the extent of territory a state controls but by its level of economic and technological development. Russia, no matter how organized politically, must first become rich if it wishes again to be powerful; and getting rich, with the handicap of a Soviet legacy, will take it a very long time indeed.

Where does this leave us as we await June's verdict? If the greater evil comes to power, Russia may undergo a serious crisis. Even if the lesser evil receives a new lease on life, we should expect exasperatingly erratic behavior. But, either way, Russia will be in no shape to inflict on us a new cold war. We should not court one by replaying the hysteria of the Anglo-Russian “great game” of the last century. •

BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Some Crime, Some Comedy

The global power of Hollywood is a perennial astonishment. I don't mean the box-office clout of American pictures, which continue to dominate the world market. The subtler, more insidious power is Hollywood style. Many filmmakers around the world can, it seems, make films indigenous to their own cultures and can also make films, well or less well, in Hollywood fashion. Catholic clerics speak (or used to) their native language and also the international language of the Church, Latin. In profane analogy, many directors can make domestic films, wherever they may live, and can also do their imagining in what is now called the classic Hollywood style.

The latest instance is Lee Tamahori. A New Zealander who is half Maori, he first came to wide attention with *Once Were Warriors* (1994), an angry drama about the treatment of Maoris in his country. Because of this film's impact, he was invited to Hollywood, where he was assigned a Hollywood subject. He has brought it off with complete Hollywood finesse. This is not a lament that a promising serious talent has "sold out": it's an astonishment that he did it so easily and well. It's noteworthy that *Mulholland Falls* (MGM) is clearly inspired by an earlier picture of the same general breed, *Chinatown*, which, too, was directed by an imported talent, Roman Polanski. Like its predecessor, *Mulholland Falls* is set in the Los Angeles of a past decade.

But it isn't the setting or breed that confirms Tamahori's transformation: it's his fervor in addressing the patently fictional, his near-fawning utilization of

types and stereotypes, his eager contract with us that what we are seeing is romance—hard-boiled, yes, but romance, with just enough verism to support our fantasies in this vein. This picture is a *film noir* in color; but the original *film noir* was almost always a confection wrapped in grittiness instead of moonlight.

Pete Dexter's screenplay, from a story by him and Floyd Mutrux, has the usual ingredients of the crime thriller: murder, sex, tangled webs of deceit. Basically (as Graham Greene once said of Westerns and private-eye pictures) its credo is lynch law. The central figures are the four members of the so-called Hat Squad, four L.A. detectives in the 1950s, distinguished by their hats and natty clothes and their tacit license to judge and to execute. (Mulholland Falls is the name of a cliff in the Hollywood hills—no water—over which the Hat Squad pushes those it convicts.) They not only deal roughly with L.A. low-life, their

leader viciously assaults three FBI agents who annoy him, and all four of the squad invade restricted areas of the U.S. military when they want to, assuming that we will support their flouting of government restrictions as minor impediments to their importance.

Their actions, however intended, are conspiracies against law. And these are not the only conspiracies. The U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, soon involved in the story, is also awash with them, including suppression of important facts and the murder of civilians. Essentially the film depicts a battle of conspiracies—between those of the detectives and those of the military. All these conspiracies are treated as the natural habitat of this kind of film, which is wised-up and thus gives us the thrill of spending two hours in the company of wised-up people.

The period is set in the expected ways, clothes, songs, cars; but there are other ways, too. Smoking is incessant; someone mentions a fee of \$25 an hour for a psychiatrist; a gay man is called a "fruit." Hulking through it all is Nick Nolte, the leader of the squad, who gives much the same performance he gave in *Q & A*, granitic, violent, smug. Melanie Griffith is his wife, in this case little more than another patiently waiting, loyal wife, a happy concubine for this marvelously male figure. Chazz Palminteri, one of those people apparently born to be a winning screen personality, is Nolte's sidekick who, because of his very appeal, is invisibly tagged for eventual trouble. (His last scene is a lachrymose classic.) John Malkovich plays the general in charge of atomic research not far from L.A., determined to countervail any preconceived notions we may have of what a general is like.

The catalyst of all the action is the murder of a luxe call girl, and, early on, we see surreptitiously filmed home movies of her at work—with a major figure in the story. Later we learn that she was involved with another major figure, and there are movies of that, too.

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Denise Calls Up. A trick—seven New Yorkers carry on their lives and loves via telephone and answering machine—but it's neatly done. (Reviewed 5/6/96) **Flirting with Disaster.** Light and laughable. A bizarre, sexy comedy about a young man's search for his biological parents, buoyantly written and directed by David O. Russell. (4/22/96) **I Shot Andy Warhol.** Mary Harron, who is English, authentically recreates the New York Underground of the '60s, with the clever but demented Valerie Solanas at the center. (5/6/96) **Last Dance.** Could be called "Dead Woman Walking," with Sharon Stone (excellent) as the Southerner on death row and Rob Morrow (puny) as her champion. The script doesn't finally satisfy, but Bruce Beresford directs it masterfully. (5/20/96)—SK

Her activities lead to the uncovering of municipal and national secrets; but her death and her life are only excuses for male action in a male world.

And there at the helm of this swaggering, ultra-Hollywood enterprise is Lee Tamahori from New Zealand, perfectly at home because Movieland is one of the places where he has long lived.

Cold Comfort Farm (Gramercy) comes from the Stella Gibbons comic novel that has been a British favorite ever since it was published in 1932, possibly best known as the source of the phrase "something nasty in the woodshed." In fact the film begins with Ada Doom as a farm child accidentally opening the woodshed door and discovering that something. Quite rightly, we never learn exactly what it was; yet it dominates her thought when, in the main story, she's an old woman.

The screenplay was done by Malcolm Bradbury, the well-known English novelist and literary critic, who has written much for British TV, both originals and adaptations. *Cold Comfort Farm* was indeed produced by BBC and Thames TV and was directed by John Schlesinger, who began his long and varied career in TV. The result, handled by Schlesinger so fluently that the small-screen origin is never suspected, is a compliment to British television.

In the early 1930s, Flora Poste, an airy, well-educated young woman, is left or-

phaned with a measly hundred pounds a year and goes to live with cousins on a farm in deepest Sussex. That family is, as Dickens might have said, a rum lot. The comedy comes not only from the weird assortment of farm folk but from Flora's breezy yet friendly—or friendly but breezy—handling of them. She is determined to sort things out, there on the farm, and this she more or less accomplishes before her London swain sweeps her off in his airplane.

Kate Beckinsale, who was Hero in Branagh's *Much Ado*, plays Flora brightly—a sort of spin-off character from Evelyn Waugh. Ian McKellen and Eileen Atkins, who were recently married (fictionally) at the end of *Jack and Sarah*, play Mr. and Mrs. Starkadder, the gloomy pillars of the rustic family. Stephen Fry gallops through as Mybug, a visiting pompous author, and Freddie Jones, not always admirable in the past, is a perfect Adam Lambsbreath, as pastoral as a 1930s shepherd in a *Punch* cartoon.

Some of the proceedings verge on the arch, but they recover in time, thanks to the calm hands of Bradbury and Schlesinger. The film was avowedly made without any concessions to American knowledge of the book or its kinds of people. But that shouldn't harm American enjoyment. There's actually a bonus for us. We can certainly smile at the story, and we can also smile generously at the comedy that those quaint English have long cherished. •

Under the Aspect of Serenity

BY JAMES WOOD

In the Beauty of the Lilies by John Updike

(Knopf, 491 pp., \$25.95)

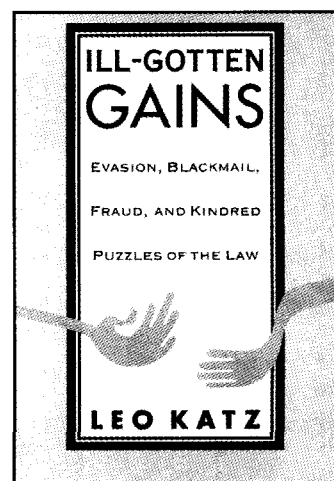
Most of John Updike's weaknesses as a writer have been mere bubbles in his sure flow. But here, in his seventeenth novel, is something like a blockage. Two of Updike's virtues—his perpetual serenity and the richness of his prose—appear to offer *In the Beauty of the Lilies* the deepest problems.

Serenity is almost palpable in Updike's work; one has to search hard for its cloudy opposite. It is difficult to picture real anguish anywhere in his massive body of writing. His four novels about Rabbit Angstrom see America

from a thousand different angles, but their lenses are stainless. Rabbit and his family slug through the usual happiness and unhappiness, yet Rabbit's wish, and perhaps Updike's desire, is to keep life thickly unvaried. Updike grants Rabbit that wish by awarding him a kingly prose style and powers of interior monologue that gown the world in velvet. For Rabbit, there is too much alluring and tormenting data to allow him to jump mental bail and run wild. In this sense, Rabbit, like his creator, is always at Rest.

Rupture is hardly to be found in Updike's world. This is perhaps because his characters, such as Rabbit, or Roger

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—Malcolm Gladwell,

*The New Yorker**

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Lambert in *Roger's Version* (1986), are too busy being Updike's surrogates, feeding on the sheens and textures of the natural world, happily prospecting for metaphor and measuring the right conditions for the moment of sensibility. Characters this engorged with poetry have no right to complaint. This is no small talent. Updike has the delicacy of a lyric poet, and his characters are lent his fine powers.

Updike's serenity and his reality-debt flow from his religion. Updike, whose grandfather was a Presbyterian minister, is a Christian with a particular loyalty to the Protestant theologian Karl Barth. Barth's teaching emphasizes God's free grace, and man's inability to affect that grace. According to Barth, God chose to reveal himself in Jesus Christ, and in no other way can we reach God. Creation is a gift, and we are the blessed recipients of this gift. We should not infer from creation that God is our creator (what is called the argument from design); we know this through Jesus Christ. Yet creation surrounds us, and we can see that, as Barth puts it in *Church Dogmatics*, "creation is the formal presupposition of the covenant in which God fulfills the will of his free love." Though Barth never says this, what is suggested is not so much an argument from design (for Christ is our proof), but a reassurance from design. We look around us, and in everything we see a reminder of God's freely bestowed relationship with us.

Updike is indebted to this vision. For him the world does indeed seem to exist as a divine visual gift, and as a kind of consolation or reassurance, rather than as a proof. Where the idea of reality as a proof would suggest intensity, reality as a reassurance suggests mildness. And perhaps, also, the difference between proof and reassurance is one between activity (the zeal to define) and receipt (the gift of God). All of Updike's work sings this hymn of receipt, and one novel dramatizes an argument around it. *Roger's Version* arranges an opposition between an Updikean follower of Barth and a young evangelist. Dale Kohler, the young evan-

gelist, argues that biology and the new physics can prove the existence of God. A world this complex must have been created by God. He applies to Roger Lambert, a professor of divinity, for a research grant. Lambert flinches from Dale's literalism and ardor. For Lambert, God could never be proved. Nor could reality ever be a sufficient argument for God's existence. Lambert feels, in the world around him, God's marvelous echo rather than his calculable presence. The novel is partly an argument on behalf of serenity, and on behalf of the con-

affected—partly because he has so much faith in the natural world that Updike provides for his delight. Walking the streets of Boston, seeing everything with Updike's swivel eye, Lambert bursts out: "The irrepressible combinations of the real!" Updike cannot help himself; his writing is so touched by the real that he must evangelize for it.

Surface, the real, this gift and grace, this reassurance—this is Updike's true deity, and he is eager on its behalf to sign us up. Of course, this is why we read him at all: for the final glaze and scrupulous enamel of his coverings. But too often Updike's characters are no more than carriers of his honey. (Nabokov, Updike's hero, has similar problems in some of his stories, and in a novel such as *Glory*, which is a ribbon of delicious sensations.) The notation of the visual world consumes a lot of his characters' time. More than that, this clogged recording of things is metaphysically satisfying, a religious end in itself. It is what redeems us for all our deficiencies, and all the temptations to which the flesh is heir. The satisfaction of reality fattens the soul. Treating the real like food, Updike's characters eat more of it when miserable. Updike's characters are protected against true rupture or disaster by the consolations of reality's gift.

But these consolations are, in the end, aesthetic rather than metaphysical. They are grounded in thingness and turned into a poetry of the visible—or rather, a cult of the visible. The aesthetic is too serene a consolation; and too aesthetic. In *Of The Farm* (1965), which is one of Updike's most beautiful novels, Joey Robinson is dealing with a difficult second marriage, and his mother's disapproval. But the real offers blessed distraction; the tiniest moments of sensation are plumply absolving: shelling peas, Joey draws power from them. And why not? For Updike gives him exquisite language: "The little spheres, waxy green, pressed by their own fat fullness toward the shape of cubes in the pod, let go serially under my thumb and tumbled as a crowd into my palm."



JOHN UPDIKE BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

solations of metaphor (Lambert's calm distance) as opposed to the certainties of the literal (Kohler's calculations).

The book is a fine vessel for Updike's mildness, which is why it is so powerful. Professor Lambert is troubled by Dale Kohler, but hardly in crisis. His faith is faint, but strongly faint. When not actually in argument with Kohler, Lambert spends most of his time greedily absorbing the delights of the natural world, including quantities of actual and imagined sex; he boasts that his twin interests are theology and pornography. Dale loses his faith at the end of his labors, but Professor Lambert's faith is hardly

Tranquil aestheticism becomes a burden when a novel is called upon to be untranquil. Unfortunately, *In the Beauty of the Lilies* is such a novel, for it is in large part about religious crisis. Its first section describes a Presbyterian minister's loss of faith. The minister is the Reverend Clarence Wilmot, and he suffers his abandonment in Paterson, New Jersey, in 1910. Elsewhere in the city, and simultaneously, D.W. Griffith is making a movie, *The Call To Arms*. Reverend Wilmot announces his crisis, and asks to be relieved of his duties. He is unable to find decent work, and spends the rest of his life as a door-to-door salesman of encyclopedias. With time on his hands, he becomes an early devotee of the movies, and "the incandescent power of these manufactured visions." The novel thus quickly establishes its own movement, from God to gods, from the sacramental to the sacramentalized, or aesthetic.

This, Updike makes clear, is modernity's journey. Truth surrenders to the depiction of truth. The movies, and references to them, form one of the girders of this large book, which binds most of the twentieth century in its four sections. Reverend Wilmot's granddaughter, Essie, will become, in mid-century, a celebrated film actress; Essie's son, Clark, will die in a kind of movie of his own, a heavily televised Waco-like conflagration at a religious retreat in Colorado. That Updike seems to be lecturing us a little, or at the least, greasing the novel's palm where previously in his work he has been an invisible guest of immense tact, suggests the new ambitions, and the new failures to be found here. It is difficult not to find this book didactic.

Clarence loses his faith; but the reader finds belief hard, too. Clarence's crisis does not live for us because Updike is at his most calm and efficient when he needs to be most ragged. Clarence loses his faith, supposedly, in an absolutist swoop: "the Reverend Clarence Arthur Wilmot, down in the rectory of the Fourth Presbyterian Church at the corner of Straight Street and Broadway, felt the last particles of faith leave him. . . . He was standing, at the moment of the ruinous pang, on the first floor of the rectory. . . ." Already this has an air of preciousness. Clarence loses his faith in the same rapid way he might have gained it—by conversion. But the heavy upholstery of the passage, gesturing toward nineteenth-century solidity ("the Reverend Clarence Arthur Wilmot") slows down the alleged rapidity of the loss. And then Updike swaddles everything too gorgeously: "With a wink of

thought, the universe had been bathed in the pitch-smooth black of hopelessness." But these warm splashes of insight do not sound very hopeless. Do a wink and a bath sound so arduous?

A little later, Clarence stands in his study surveying his shelves of theological classics, now redundant. These sturdy canonical books, thinks Clarence, "were ignorant but not pathetic in the way of the attempts of the century just now departed to cope with God's inexorable recession: the gallant poems of Tennyson and Longfellow, phrasing doubt in the lingering hymnal music. . . ." Now, Updike explicitly inserts himself here, when he refers to "the century just now departed." But the rest of this passage is also Updike's language rather than Clarence's, and it is Updike on a fine calm morning at his writing desk in Massachusetts. "God's inexorable recession" is a phrase of placid summation, and "gallant" a word of placid condescension. They belong to a review, not to a crisis. This is the sound of Updike's *Version*; his serenity.

It is as if words themselves might protect against crisis. Clarence is filled out as a character, but his loss of faith never really seems to shake him enough. One suspects that Updike, this acolyte of plenitude, finds it hard to picture absence—the absolute absence of God

which Clarence is supposed to be feeling. For as soon as Updike begins to picture it, he fills the emptiness with words and images. One of the best passages of this novel—it is a passage of astounding proficiency—occurs when Clarence goes to visit a Presbyterian moderator named Thomas Dreaver, whose job it is to persuade Clarence out of his loss of faith. The moderator speaks in great skeins of surety. He comes alive for the reader: he is young, ambitious, a clever theologian who holds his faith more intelligently than Clarence has lost his. Even Clarence is given some life in this conversation, though it is Dreaver who glows. It would seem that Updike finds it easier to picture faith than its loss. This is why *Roger's Version* is so successful. In that novel, Updike appears to be pitting fullness of faith against faintness. But he is actually drawing two faiths, one extreme and one serene, but both full. He is limning two presences. In his new novel, absence poses problems: absence is absent.

Updike is a prose writer of great beauty, but that prose confronts one with the question of whether beauty is enough. At times, his fondness for an expensive phrase obscures, because it marks the moment at which he inserts himself oppressively. In *Roger's Version*, a passing girl is described as "poignantly breastless."

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This is characteristic of Updike. One hears the somewhat weary satiation or fatigued gratitude, as if writing were like overtopping a waiter and merely a matter of adding another 10 percent of the language to the page. But this does not help us see anything. There is nothing necessarily poignant about breastlessness; it is Updike who finds it poignant. Such writing bestows rather than discovers.

Of course, discovery is one of the slickest illusions in fiction, for the writer must seem to be surprised by what he already knows. Adjectives and adverbs are Updike's weakness, as metaphors and images are his strength. One sees this throughout his new novel, and typically at one moment when Clarence hears, on the streets of Paterson, "operatic ribbons of Italian, rapid stabs of Yiddish, mushy thrusts of Polish." Again, these are an author's phrases, not Clarence's. They distance, rather than focus, the sound of these languages, and the result, for all its apparent fanciness, merely validates cliché: Italians are musical, Jews fast-talking, Poles incomprehensible.

In fairness, the prose in Updike's new novel suffers both Updike's usual leakage and a more deliberate intervention. Updike's reference to "the century just now departed" is the clue. *In the Beauty of the Lilies* is, for much of its length, an historical novel, and Updike's inky fingers, which press down on almost every page, testify to the amount of school-boy's research he has done. He is frank about this. He lists twenty-two books which have been helpful to him. All through the novel, information is laid at our feet as the cat offers us its shrew or mouse—with a somewhat forlorn triumphalism. "His father had tuberculosis. It was the year a ship called the *Lusitania* was sunk in big headlines." We learn about the silk workers' strike in 1913 in Paterson, about the industrialization of Delaware in the 1920s (the Wilmot family moves there), about soda fountains ("The soda fountain was a new thing, installed in 1920; the therapeutic effects of soda water had been long advertised. . ."), and a great deal about the movies. We hear about "the Kinetoscope and the wonderful Projectoscope" which "had been invented by Thomas Edison . . . 'the movies' were above all American." Or this: "In March of 1927, Clara Bow created a sensation as the irrepressible shop-girl Betty Lou, who woos her boss. . ."

Some of this goes beyond the ordinary stuffing of the historical novel, and seems vulgar. After Clarence's son, Teddy, kisses his future wife, Emily, Updike notices that Emily's kisses are hungrier

than Teddy's. Then this meditation follows: "It did seem that the world was turning sexier. In the movies, the Mack Sennett girls showed more and more leg in their bathing suits, and there were 'vamps' played by foreign actresses with names like Pola Negri." In a similar spirit, we get this portrait, later in the novel and later in the century, of the film producer Harry Cohn: "Cohn, the last of the master moguls, had turned sixty, and Columbia was riding high for the moment. . . . He wore a pale-gray suit, his white necktie with its silver scribble no doubt a Countess Mara." This kind of writing is trash, and does not belong in Updike's vicinity.

"No doubt a Countess Mara:" there is "no doubt" because what we are presented with is a mannequin, dressed in the clothes of historical predictability. Updike's writing does not discover Cohn; he already exists in a world anterior to the fictional world, and is merely hired by Updike for the day. To Updike's tendency to confirm rather than discover, *In the Beauty of the Lilies* brings all the cognitive idleness of historical fiction. The historical novel makes smooth pacts between its characters and historical events. The danger in such books is that characters will be no more than pacts themselves, composite agreements between color and expectation. And in particular, in novels which chew their way through the decades as this one does, the writer will have to ensure that his characters do not act simply because historical event demands that they should (dancing the Charleston in the '20s, going off to Spain in the '30s, becoming anti-Communist in the late '40s, and so on).

Wisely, Updike does not try to itemize each decade. His novel's first section, which concerns Clarence and his loss of faith, takes place in New Jersey in 1910; in the second, we move to small-town Delaware in the '20s and '30s, as we follow the progress and the marriage of Clarence's son, Teddy, to Emily. The Wilmot family, once proud, has shriveled, economically and socially. Updike has always been very good at small-town languor. His portrait of Alton, Pennsylvania in *The Centaur* (1963), and its sketch of a teenage boy desperate to escape his family's clumsy warmth, is one of the best things he has done. Here he beautifully conveys Teddy's untroubled lack of ambition (he works for most of his life as a mailman), and the way in which Clarence's tormented loss of faith has become an easier lack in the next generation. His third section evokes the minor, Delaware childhood of Essie, Teddy and Emily's daughter. She becomes, first, a

model, then a movie star playing opposite Clark Gable and Gary Cooper.

Once Essie, and the novel, go to California, the writing veers to the sensational. Hollywood is filled in as little more than scented Californian nights and grotesque producers. The drumming references to movies begin to seem over-rhythmic. The decades rattle by. The novel's last section has Essie's son, Clark, seduced by a Koresh-like cult. The cult is besieged by the FBI and ATF. The conflagration follows the Koresh disaster closely. (Updike mentions two books on cults in his afterword.)

Updike's people in this novel have depth and shape, but they are bent that way by research. In fiction, characters cannot afford to be exemplary, and too often these people seem to be wandering around in historical uniform, saluting the zeitgeist. Henry James complained that George Eliot gave every possible ripple to her characters but did not see them, and did not see them "in the irresponsible plastic way." Updike's characters are plastic enough—they move, they are flexible. But they are too responsible, or exemplary. They are responsible to history. Even Updike's attempt to be casually historical can seem deliberately casual. Teddy reproaches his mother, at one moment, for being "a hundred years behind the times. Read some Mencken. Read some Shaw. Read some Bertrand Russell, even." There is nothing wrong with this list, except that its flawlessness is what is wrong with it. Teddy becomes, as it were, a criminal who knows his alibi too well; he invites our suspicion.

His characters are given historicizing powers. Emily takes Teddy to see Greta Garbo in *The Temptress*. On the way out, she says: "Women can't really do that yet, but it's nice to think they can some day." The problem here is that history is used not to challenge but to confirm a character's essence. And one has the feeling that history is nothing so much as Updike's slathered detail. His characters feel, to the reader, trapped by Updike, condemned to wear his informational hides. Essie enters a local beauty contest as a teenager. It is the late 1940s, and anti-Communism is in the air. On stage, she makes a pro-Communist statement and loses. Afterwards she is rueful, and Updike decides on her behalf: "She didn't really mean to defend Communists. She couldn't even picture one, or imagine why anybody would want to overthrow the American way of life, with its hemlocks and hollyhocks and soda fountains and new Studebakers without front fenders, just creamy smooth sides." This sigh of notation, autographed with

its characteristic clearing of the throat (the "with its" prelude) is wholly Updike's style. And this is Updike's detail, too.

Who but Updike would imagine "the American way of life" in this coolly rhapsodic way? A 16-year-old girl? One feels here that Essie is unable to rebel not against American history, but against the weight of Updike's American history. It is as if Updike is making a hidden confession here, as if he is saying: "Essie is unable to picture another way of life because it is inconceivable that she would find another reality more powerful than the one I have made for her, and made her for."

Of course, there is gorgeousness in the book. No Updike novel is without its stipend of fine words. His language will languish for a page or two, or become primly professional, and then a flame is suddenly lit, as in this picture of New York under snow: "Dirty plowed snow was mountainously heaped along the curbs, burying the trash cans, and people had worn a narrow wobbling path like a forest trail, carrying their expensive parcels and wearing their expensive clothes. She loved it when it snowed in the movies—so richly, barrels of Lux flakes—and it

was like that here. West Nineteenth Street seemed a brownstone village street, everybody's breath visible and lemon-yellow dog pee scribbled in the snow among the cigarette butts."

Such a writer knows all there is to know about "the irrepressible combinations of the real." But too much of this novel advances into serenity when it should retreat into anguish, and too much of it finds what already exists rather than creates what does not. The novel's final section may stand as emblem. Clark is spirited away by his religious cult, and then besieged by the FBI. But the novel's reliance on a narrative that is already familiar to us sucks interest away from its fictionalized telling. Updike's writing, so devout toward the mild grace of reality, is never less than professional in this final theological screech. But this is hardly enough. Clark is shaded in sympathetically; but his historical trench has already been dug. Only fire awaits him. Like Updike's other characters in this novel, like his great-grandfather Clarence, who lost his faith too conveniently at the gates of the agnostic twentieth century, he exists only to be confirmed by history. Alas, to confirm characters is not to free them. •

Before Justice

BY ALAN WOLFE

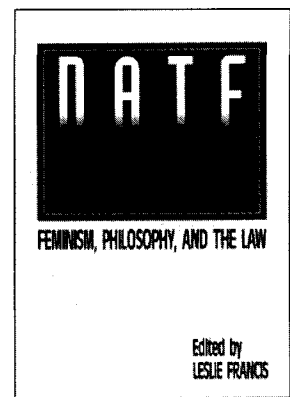
The Decent Society by Avishai Margalit translated by Naomi Goldblum

(Harvard University Press, 304 pp., \$35)

Twenty-five years ago this December, John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* revolutionized political philosophy. In that book liberalism received one of its most coherent, principled, and even (at times) eloquent defenses of this illiberal century. Relying on an ingenious metaphor, Rawls asked us to evaluate the fairness of any practice or institution behind a veil of ignorance, and in this way he humanized Kant's impersonal stringencies about moral duty. By demonstrating how rational individuals operating under constraints of ignorance would choose distributive mechanisms which worked to the benefit of the least advantaged members of society, Rawls provided a justification for the welfare state based not on subjective opinion but on logic, once his

initial assumptions were accepted.

A Theory of Justice received substantial criticism in the intervening years, but the tone of the criticism testified to its influence. Communitarians objected to Rawls's preference for the right over the good, and they demonstrated how unrealistic to real life were his assumptions; but the sting was taken out of the debate by Rawls's willingness to meet his critics at least halfway in subsequent reformulations of his arguments. Even more importantly, in a philosopher's version of life imitating art, the controversies that gripped American society in the intervening years—such as the great debates about affirmative action and intergenerational conflict—were ideally suited to illustrate the advantages and the disadvantages of Rawls's way of thinking. Of course, not everyone



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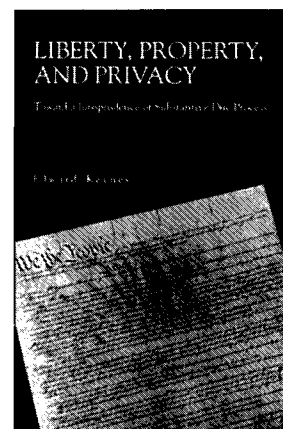
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accepted Rawls; Alasdair MacIntyre and the Straussian conservatives, who differ on many things, had little interest in saving liberalism. When the dust settled, however, *A Theory of Justice* had become the starting point for most serious discussions about how the good society should be achieved.

Avishai Margalit writes in the shadow of Rawls. He wishes to soften the Rawlsian project in two significant ways. First, Margalit is reluctant to offer a theory; his preference, reflecting British styles of philosophy, is to explore the meaning of concepts which touch on moral matters, and in this manner to establish that, when we enter such contested terrain, we know what we are talking about. Second, he shifts the discussion away from Rawls's notion of justice as fairness. On Rawls's account, a just society is one in which every individual, by imagining himself in the possible place of every other individual, seeks a rough kind of equality, especially with respect to such primary goods as basic liberties and material satisfactions. Margalit, by contrast, believes that our goal should be a society containing institutions which avoid humiliating people. He calls such a society decent, as opposed to just, civilized, tolerant or fair.

Humiliation, in Margalit's account, occurs when an individual's self-respect is injured; it deprives people of membership in "the family of Man." (I wish Margalit had found a less sentimental metaphor for his commitment to universality.) Self-respect is close to, but is not the same as, honor. Honor is a "graded" concept: an exactly equal distribution of social honor would vitiate its meaning. But this is not true of self-respect, says Margalit. Everyone can possess self-respect and it can still have meaning. Nor is self-respect the same as self-esteem; Uriah Heep had oodles of the latter, none of the former. Self-respect is closer to dignity, which is its outward manifestation or attitude. Human beings, Margalit argues, deserve respect not because of their rationality (emphasizing such a trait excludes the mentally retarded), but because they have the capacity to be free: "every person is capable of a future way of life that is discontinuous with the past." I believe that we should grant Margalit the possibility that the retarded might someday overcome their condition, even if the possibility, on empirical grounds, might be slim.

Human beings can be humiliated not only as individuals, but also as members of groups. Although we live together in "the family of Man," an abstraction so universal can only be violated by the

most extreme forms of humiliation, such as concentration camps. In everyday life, the groups which are important to us are those which shape our culture and which give us a concrete sense of belonging. Margalit (along with Joseph Raz) calls them "encompassing groups" and provides a detailed set of defining characteristics, but the general idea is simple enough: we deserve respect not only as individuals, but as Jews, homosexuals, African Americans, Irish Catholics. "A decent society," Margalit writes, "is one that does not reject morally legitimate encompassing groups." Encouraging disrespect toward the Mafia is not a break with decency, for the Mafia is not legitimate. But a decent society does not humiliate Mexican-Americans by referring to them all as José.

Just as a Rawlsian concern with justice as fairness was appropriate to a time when questions of economic distribution and fundamental rights were on the political agenda, Margalit's emphasis on dignity seems especially relevant to contemporary concerns with inclusion. His book hardly shies away from offering positions on hotly contested matters. Muslim school girls in Paris should be allowed to wear the chador, Margalit believes, for stripping them of the right to traditional dress violates their dignity; but they would have no such right if there were a uniform dress code, for then no one's dignity would be violated more than anyone else's. A society which can afford measures that would enable the handicapped to move around with help from others violates their self-respect if it does not provide them. A decent society ought to provide non-stigmatizing forms of welfare; it should, for those who do have work, give them "the opportunity to find at least one reasonably meaningful occupation." It should recognize a strict separation between public and private, and restrain itself from encroaching on personal privacy.

Margalit makes it clear that his objective is to offer a picture of "a utopia through which to criticize reality." But this is a decidedly toned-down utopia, which seeks to restrict the goal that we ought to reach in order to make it more likely that we might reach it. Hence Margalit is careful to emphasize that a decent society is not under a positive obligation to accord everyone self-respect, only a negative obligation to avoid humiliation. The decent society is contrasted, moreover, with the civilized one; the latter would require every individual to treat every other one without humiliation, whereas the former requires only that institutions act in that way. Decency is also less demanding than justice. As

Margalit shows, exploitation (at least in the Marxist sense) cannot exist in a just society, but it might exist in a decent one.

Margalit believes that a concern with decency walks a fine line between stoics, who believe that "society is unable to humiliate anyone who does not want to be humiliated" and anarchists, who believe that all social institutions humiliate all the time. He wants to take a strong stand against exclusion and rejection without offering a blueprint for perfection. Just getting people to respect each other and themselves is accomplishment enough. If realizing a decent society leads us to want to create a just society, Margalit concludes, so much the better; but let us worry about that after we get to where our human capacities suggest we ought to be.

Judith Shklar wrote that the liberal's primary objective is to avoid cruelty. Margalit transforms that injunction from the physical to the mental: our first duty is never to allow our institutions to stigmatize. Margalit writes with the clarity that philosophers at their best can offer. If the purpose of political philosophy is less the construction of a system and more the ability to focus an argument, this book is a great success. Sinning against one of the commandments of professional philosophy, Margalit does not seek to write from a point beyond all experience, but makes obvious his preoccupation not only with the Nazis and the fall of Communism, but with the Palestinians and the complexities of Israeli society.

Margalit will come in for his share of criticism for thinning an already-thin version of liberalism. Even a perfectly constructed decent society would contain flaws: individual discrimination might persist, even if institutional discrimination were eradicated. This minimalism will disappoint communitarians as well as those who believe that the good society will not exist until everyone loves everyone else. Still, if Margalit is a minimalist in some ways, he is a maximalist in others, for humiliation is a concept with a built-in tendency to expand. "I am more optimistic about the chances for establishing a decent society than about the chances for realizing a just society," Margalit writes. But if humiliation can be found everywhere, the prospects for abolishing it anywhere become that much more difficult.

Aware of this problem, Margalit begins his book by making a distinction between conditions which are humiliating because of "natural life conditions" and those which are due to human action. It is humiliating to be old and frail, but since the cause of that condition is biological, it plays no role in evaluating the

decency of a society. In fact, this is a hard distinction to maintain; our intellectual currents run in the other direction. Yes, people age (one can hear the critics say), but the negativity that we associate with aging is a product of persistent discrimination against the elderly. From that, it is a short step to the idea that AIDS is humiliating because of homophobia or that breast cancer is humiliating because of sexism. A litigious and therapeutic society obsessed with aging and with disease will leave no form of humiliation to nature. And, alas for minimalism, it would be right not to do so, at least in certain cases, for who can draw the line between the indignities that are suffered by the retarded as a result of what they lack and the indignities that are caused by horror in the eyes of others?

Nor does it necessarily serve the cause of liberal minimalism to make a distinction between a civilized society (individuals do not humiliate) and a decent one (institutions do not humiliate). Margalit himself collapses the distinction, when he argues that some forms of individual humiliation—such as the way prisoners attack each other—ought to count as institutional humiliation. Humiliation, moreover, is usually more ingenious than the categories with which we describe it: a ban on institutional humiliation might let loose a variety of inventive ways for individuals to offend one another. The decent society could well turn out to be the hypocritical society, banning actions in public while understanding that they will expand in private.

Expansionist tendencies can also be found in Margalit's decision to argue that humiliation can exist in the absence of humiliators. One can easily understand his reasoning here. From the standpoint of the humiliated, it makes little difference whether meanness is deliberate or indifferent. Once we search for remedies to humiliation, however, it matters greatly whether or not we include in our conception of wrong acts the existence of wrong intentions. If humiliation is awful, it should be forbidden. But if there are no identifiable humiliators, against whom should action be taken to forbid it? The obvious answer is to indict the entire society, the good as well as the bad. If such efforts stigmatize well-intentioned people by lumping them together with the indifferent and the hostile, humiliation is not so much eradicated as shifted around.

Then there is the problem of who decides whether a contested act or utterance is humiliating. A philosopher might be tempted to search for principles to invoke here—such as the principle that

"humiliation is whatever you express toward the other that you would consider humiliating if something analogous were directed at you"—but applying most such principles, Margalit points out, results in a bias against vulnerable groups. At the same time, it is insufficient to allow the vulnerable group to decide what is humiliating, for, as Margalit puts it, "minority groups with a history of persecution often suffer from a cultural paranoia of humiliation and insult. They 'fish' for insults in places where insults and humiliation cannot be seen by the unaided eye, even by an outsider observer sympathetic to the minority group." His solution to this dilemma is to call for a presumption in favor of the claims of the humiliated, recognizing that such claims can be overridden if they are implausible.

Yet such a presumption runs the risk of obliterating Margalit's distinction between a negative duty not to humiliate and a positive obligation to show respect. That distinction owes a great deal to Isaiah Berlin's warning that efforts to realize positive liberty, no matter how well intentioned, run the risk of straightening man's crooked timber. But what happens if a vulnerable group believes that discrimination against it has been so pervasive that acts which "merely" do

not humiliate are insufficient? For such groups, something more than tolerance, some active acceptance of their style of life, is required in the name of dignity. Yet if we owe encompassing groups something more than indifference, we have already crossed the line into having positive obligations toward them.

In contemporary society, no other area of contention illustrates the conflict between neutral tolerance and positive respect as much as the question of homosexuality. Suppose that the mass media, as they have done in the past, choose not to portray the existence of gay life in America. Their actions are not homophobic, at least in the strong sense. They simply pretend that there is no such thing. Margalit concludes that gays would be right to view such "benign neglect" (if it is benign) as humiliation, for gays are "being denied the legitimacy of expressing themselves as human beings by presenting their form of life in public." For devout religious believers for whom homosexuality is a sin, however, indifference toward gay lifestyles is already a major step away from their deepest convictions. To ask them to go one step further toward public recognition is to impose a positive obligation on them. Whether it is morally right to do so is not my point; I want only to show

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Blema S. Steinberg is associate professor of political science at McGill University and a psychoanalyst affiliated with the department of psychiatry, Jewish General Hospital, Montreal.

how the concept of humiliation resists any efforts to narrow our duties to actions that we should avoid taking.

The distribution of humiliation is not like the distribution of income. Technical problems aside, one's relative income can be compared objectively to another's: if you are in the bottom 20 percent of the population, you are worse off than someone in the next 20 percent. But precisely because humiliation involves self-respect, its presence or absence will always be to some degree subjectively determined. How, in a liberal democratic society, can someone other than the self conclude that humiliation does not exist, if the self whose respect is under attack claims it does? Margalit stresses the difference between the "microethical" concept of civility and the "macroethical" concept of decency. A good liberal is usually more concerned with institutional design in public than with the management and control of motives in private. Still, when a good liberal gets involved in concepts as subjectively slippery as humiliation, he might find himself engaged in micromanaging the intricacies of everyday life in ways that run counter to all his proper caution.

Should all forms of humiliation be abolished if we could do so without violating liberal tenets? There is no easy answer to this question. Sensitive to paradox, Margalit tells the story of a North American tribe which reserved torture only for enemies deserving of respect. Respect, like humiliation, has many manifestations. A decent society may be better than a stoic society, but if all opportunities for demonstrating stoicism in the face of assaults on dignity are removed, so would those forms of self-respect which come from withstanding or turning one's back on insult. Like Hegel's master and slave, dignity and assault require each other. This is not to excuse cruelty or to justify abandoning anyone to his fate. It is to serve as reminder that, since self-respect comes from within, it

can be lost even if no assault is ever forthcoming and it can flourish no matter how vicious the assault.

Margalit's sense of paradox tends to disappear when he discusses current political issues. Consider his discussion of the welfare state. Poverty, he points out, is humiliating. But so are at least some efforts to eradicate it, such as those motivated by feelings of pity. This is true, Margalit argues, even if one's motives for helping the poor are charitably noble, for those who are grateful to others, yet unable to repay them for their gift, will find themselves in a humiliating position. It follows that a welfare society, one in which people take care of others voluntarily, is inferior from the standpoint of decency to a welfare state which redistributes income without passing judgment on those in need.

Such a conclusion passes much too quickly over the complicated ties between those who offer charity and those who receive it. One cannot equate the needs of the desperate for support with the needs of the comfortable for gratitude, but without some recognition of the latter's concerns, support for welfare will inevitably decline. Welfare has to be paid for by someone. Bureaucratic rules and Byzantine tax codes muddy the clarity of the relationship between giver and receiver, but they do not sever it. Margalit's welfare state, in trying to abolish the humiliation involved in receiving a gift, simultaneously abolishes the decency involved in giving one.

Nor does such a welfare state necessarily succeed in eliminating the humiliation that is involved in accepting its benefits. Even if provision were offered unconditionally and without passing judgment, who would be fooling whom? People on welfare know they are on welfare, a reality which can be humiliating enough. When generous provision fails to restore their self-respect, should a decent society take steps beyond the welfare state? If so, would such steps lead more in the direction of Rawls's just society than in the direction of Margalit's decent one? There may be no way to avoid humiliation short of radical equality—a step well beyond Rawls—but if that is the case, then one has to make an argument for equality, not for decency. And even that might not be enough. One can easily imagine a society of complete equality in which some people still feel humiliated. Indeed, it would hardly come as a surprise that individuals in such a society would show a special sensitivity to humiliating signals.

Consideration of the steps that we would have to take to minimize or to eliminate humiliation raises the question

of whether there is an argument to be made in its favor. As awkward as the question may sound, most societies—probably all of them—make special provision for humiliation. Prisons are clearly designed, not merely to take law-breakers off the street, but to humiliate those assigned to them. Fraternities practice ritual humiliation, as does the Marine Corps. Margalit discusses such total institutions and naturally finds them incompatible with the requirements of a decent society. "A decent society," he concludes, "cares about the dignity of its prisoners."

Here lies an argument, if there is one, on behalf of humiliation. For how can we protect the dignity and the self-respect of those who are victimized by criminals without in some way violating the dignity of those who commit crimes? Dignity is not only an attribute of individuals. It also describes a relationship. And since it describes a relationship, dignity (or self-respect) is not only, contra Margalit, a graded concept, it also can be a zero-sum concept. Some have it only if others do not. Just because some people are fortunate enough not to be stigmatized, to have sufficient income, or to be law-abiding does not mean that their desire for dignity should be overruled in the interests of making sure that every last person is treated with self-respect. Those who respect self-respect should be prepared to acknowledge that there are conditions under which it should rightly be forfeited—or else why is self-respect important?

The Decent Society should not be confused with trendy "virtue" books. This is not a sermon, even less a political platform. "What I am offering here," Margalit concludes, "is ... a story whose heroes are concepts. ... There is a danger implicit in the concepts used in this book. ... The arousing function of concepts such as honor and humiliation is liable to turn discussions of the decent society into a lot of hot air—that is, discussions with no concern for truth but only for the creation of a warm, uplifting atmosphere." But not here. Margalit applies cold logic, hair-splitting distinctions and counter-intuitive definitions to concepts very close to the human heart. Sometimes the method seems inappropriate to the subject; the political naïveté which results when a concept is followed to its logical meaning could use an occasional dose of sociological realism. But compared to the sloppiness of so many "virtue" books, Margalit's book offers a great deal, especially an opportunity to argue with someone who is really thinking. A decent society would have more books like *A Decent Society*. •



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Wanderer Fantasy

BY SCOTT L. MALCOMSON

Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and Their Journey by Isabel Fonseca

(Knopf, 322 pp., \$25)

No contemporary population has been so consistently understood in purely stereotypical terms as the Gypsies, and that is saying something. Isabel Fonseca tries valiantly to write a pleasant book about a people about whom few pleasant things are ever said. She is no romantic, so we are spared the Lorca lyricism, the flamenco playing and the horse trading, the happy rogues next door. Fonseca spent time with Gypsies in Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and the German marches. She begins with the cautionary tale of Papusza, a poet-singer in Poland whose career was ended when a Gypsy court found her guilty of association with *gadje* (non-Gypsies) and expelled her from Gypsy life. Fonseca moves on to an extended visit with the Duka family of Albania, which anchors her book in daily life and enables a reader to appreciate the central importance of family. The rest of her book is a series of character studies, with background gracefully imparted at the right moments: linguistic peculiarities of Romani, persecutions past (slavery in Romania, the Holocaust) and present (her reporting on German-Gypsy relations and Romanian anti-Gypsy violence is very good), contemporary Gypsy activism and the effort to establish a useful Gypsy identity.

Fonseca resists stereotyping Gypsies as such; but in a kind of universal, literary way Fonseca's characters are also stereotypical. Each has a role to play in the social drama: the assimilated woman, the outcast mistress of a *gadjo*, the *paterfamilias*, the intellectual, the terrified refugee, the Gypsy-smitten outsider, the tyrannical chief. The assignment of such dramatic roles to real people is a convention of postwar Western travel writing, and Fonseca's book is itself a stereotype of such writing. *Bury Me Standing* makes use of all of this genre's techniques: generalization (Gypsy culture "emphasizes the collective and eschews the introspective");

the undefined first-person plural ("the [Gypsy] kids were tougher than ours," "the Gypsies do not have a presence ... in our private, mental archives of the Holocaust"); quick, often grotesque physical descriptions ("an ancient toothless man in a grimy felt fez," "Saip's large, bosomy, giggly wife"); and linguistic incomprehension (Nuzi "wanted to make sure I understood him; he had a lot to get across. And so we developed a system. *Snet pach!* is the Albanian equivalent of 'Bless you!' said after a sneeze. '*Snet?*' Nuzi would inquire, and, if I had understood, I'd reply with a triumphant '*Pach!*'").

This book takes place in that late modern crepuscule where all peoples are something less than what they once were. "Among Gypsies rich and poor, East or West, the *impression* of nomadism remains." Most Gypsies have "kept something of their wandering past." And so on: another saga of attenuation. In an identitarian twilight, Fonseca's Gypsies, welcome nowhere, roam as shadows of their former stereotypes. Only some are thieves, beggars and palm-reading cheats. They still move in boisterous groups—"Posses of Gypsy women—you never see a lone Gypsy—are a common spectacle"—and they still lie. ("Gypsies lie. They lie a lot.") But these are survival tactics, which makes them more, or less, than stereotypes.

Or maybe it doesn't. For someone who appears to like Gypsies, and who advocates tolerance of them, not least because she wonders whether they aren't "the new Jews" of Eastern Europe," Fonseca often belittles her subjects, making them appear childlike, inarticulate, even pathetic. She distances herself with a humor that can be cruel:

It was easy to imagine Emilia a homecoming queen on her float (the bed in her current flat was a draped, four-poster barge of diaphanous lilac fluff). From her wedding album Emilia gave me a picture of herself in all her finery, fronting her game-show haul of brightly colored, alternately furry



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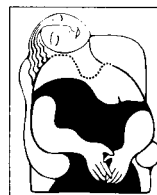
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and lustrous gifts. She wore a white dress and stiff, matching hat that resembled an upended bowl, with flowered tassels hanging down from it like stringed popcorn.

Keep in mind that Emilia's story is a tragic one of misjudged love, forced cultural exile, abandonment by her family, tenuous dignity and patiently tended hope, along with the usual Bulgarian Gypsy diet of everyday humiliations, to which may now be added "foreign visitor making fun of my hat to an international reading public and adding a photo for good measure."

Fonseca's intentions are good, but her book does not depart as much as one would like from the tradition of Western writing on Gypsies. This literature, for example, has usually portrayed Gypsies as timeless, or at least behind the times. Here is Fonseca on Jeta, one of the Dukas: "It was rare to find a *modern* malaise in a Gypsy woman; experience was generally too circumscribed." Fonseca's treatment of Gypsy activism is repeatedly marred by this faith that real historical time is something that we have and they do not. Fonseca is keeping faith with the conventions of postwar Western travel writing, which require postwar Western culture (that first-person plural) to reside at the apex of historical development. The past is, quite literally, a foreign country: the subjects of travel writing are, almost by definition, receding in time. Everything that happens to them has already happened to us moderns. But she is also keeping faith, again, with the tradition of Western writing about Gypsiness. It is a remarkably consistent corpus of writing, and Fonseca seems unevenly aware of

it—and of the ease with which her own book fits into its tradition.

"**T**here is no Nation which does not hold them to be extremely harmful," Sancho de Moncada, a professor of theology at the University of Toledo, wrote to Phillip III of Spain in 1619. The women are "wanderers, gossipers, disturbers, always in the plazas and in groups of talkers." "Beggars," "famous thieves," Gypsies only "rob and run away." Since they are characterized by "incurability," they cannot be what we would call assimilated. They lie even about their beliefs. "In exterior appearance they accommodate themselves to the Religion of the Province in which they move." Moncada compared Gypsies to Jews and to Moriscos, or forcibly baptized Muslims, except that the Gypsies were even "more useless." Phillip had expelled the Moriscos, and Moncada was urging him to expel the Gypsies, though his own preference was for executing or enslaving them. All three options were already being exercised, but inconsistently.

Moncada was himself building on a tradition that dated to the fifteenth century in Europe and, if you include imaginative use of ancient and biblical sources, well before. "Writers commonly say that the first time Gypsies were seen in Europe was in the year 1417," he observed. That opinion still holds, though the definition of "Europe," then as now, is debatable. The earliest Byzantine source for a Gypsy sighting in Constantinople (part of Europe?) is from around 1068; the presence of Gypsies in the Peloponnese is well attested by the fourteenth century, as is their arrival in the Balkans. Wallachian princes were already trading Gypsies as property at that time, and by the early fifteenth century a system of slavery was being established in the trans-Danubian principalities. Straightforward chattel slavery would later expand through much of what is now Romania. (It was not abolished until 1856.)

As to the Gypsies' arrival in "European" lands, in or around 1417, the sources state that certain "Egyptians" arrived as pilgrims, claiming (the stories vary) to have been expelled from their Middle Eastern or North

African homeland because of an act of impiety. (Scholars now agree that the Gypsies originated in India.) Their penance was to wander Europe, usually for the biblical span of seven years. They sometimes produced dubious safe-conducts from princes or prelates. Within a few years, Gypsies had visited the Baltic states, France, Italy and Spain. The Egyptian-pilgrim trick lasted more than seven years, but not that much more. Even the earliest chroniclers were distrustful, worried by the visitors' dark skins, palm-reading and tendency to steal.

By the middle of the fifteenth century, alms were often coming with a condition: the Gypsies had to leave town. In 1499, a Spanish law prescribed banishment for those who refused to find masters and settle. Soon the Diet of the Holy Roman Empire would outlaw Gypsies, and Louis XII of France would write an expulsion order that explicitly annulled any safe-conducts. The Dutch organized "Gypsy hunts." Gypsies probably did not reach the British Isles until around 1505. The first measures against them were passed by 1530.

In the early sixteenth century, Gypsies—or Gypsiness—emerged as a cultural trope. The distinction is important, because everyone had trouble deciding what Gypsies were, and Gypsies had no reason to help them. The solution, legally and artistically, was (as we now say) to essentialize Gypsies, to develop a stereotype. In 1609, James VI of Scotland made it lawful to execute people once it was proved "that they are called, known, repute and holden Egyptians." Twelve years later a declining Ben Jonson wrote a masque for James, by then ruler of England and Scotland, called *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*. It was a ribald comedy, performed by the king's favorites, and probably by the king himself. One can only wonder what it was like to have a disguised king impersonating someone from a social group that he had ordered to be murdered; and to do it amid double entendres and vulgarities.

A confusion of identity was the greatest joke. "If here we be a little obscure it is our pleasure," a Gypsy character rather nobly says, "for/rather then wee will offer to be our owne Interpreters/we are resolved not to be understood." With their "tawney faces," Jonson's Gypsies confirm every stereotype: thievery, bizarre appearance, musical talent, fortune-telling, vagabonding, lying. After some climactic drivel about James's virtue, the play has an epilogue which reveals the skin-color deception and extols the transformative power of literature:

Ode to Concrete

You'll outlast me, good old concrete,
as I've outlasted, it seems, some men
who had taken me, too, for a kind of street,
citing color of eyes, or mien.

So I praise your inanimate, porous looks
not out of envy but as the next
of kin—less durable, plagued with loose
joints, though still grateful to the architects.

I applaud your humble—to be exact,
meaningless—origins, roar and screech,
fully matched, however, by the abstract
destination, beyond my reach.

It's not that nothing begets its kind
but that the future prefers to court
a date that's resolutely blind
and wrapped in a petrified long skirt.

JOSEPH BRODSKY

... wee are *Gipsies* of no common kind Sir
you have beheld and with delight their
change
and how they came transformed may
thinck it strange ...
But least it prove like wonder to the sight
to see a *Gipsie* (as an *Ethiop*) white.
Knewe that what didde our faces was
an oyntment ...
It was fetcht of with water and a ball
and to our transformation this was all
Save what the Master *Fashioner* calls his
ffor to a *Gipsies* metamorphosis
(who doth disguise his habit and his face
and takes on a false person by his place)
the power of *poesie* can never faile her
assisted by a *Barbor* and a *Taylor*.

This image of Gypsies has hardly changed since. I should emphasize that the Western literature on Gypsies concerns, all but exclusively, Western Gypsies. When Fonseca says Gypsies, she means European Gypsies. This is true of the literature generally. Such a European focus means that information which might broaden the Gypsy concept remains exiled, so to speak. Errors easily become facts. My *Columbia Encyclopedia*, for example, says that Gypsies arrived in North America in the late 1800s. That would have surprised Allan Pinkerton—he of the detective agency—who, in *The Gypsies and the Detectives*, a novel written in 1879 and based on “actual occurrences,” has Gypsies here in colonial times, with an emigration upsurge around 1850. Pinkerton’s information, as usual, was good.

The European preoccupation with Gypsiness is also a European preoccupation with Europeaness. The “problem” with Gypsies, as it has normally been expressed, is that “they don’t fit in” (this holds for *Bury Me Standing*, too); but it is the Europeans who decide what “fitting” is. The Gypsies beg a question of some importance to Europeans: What are Europeans? That this question should be investigated in the form of its opposite—What are Gypsies?—tells us, like Jonson’s play, more about Europeans than about Gypsies.

This European tradition seems to be based in a fear of pollution. The Renaissance and the Reformation sources speak of dirt and false Christians and spies for the Turk. Enlightenment writers, in their antireligious mood, appear to have been more upset by “sorcery, talismans, augury” (Voltaire) and a lack of civilized behavior; Diderot’s *Encyclopédie* characterized Gypsies as “vagabonds who profess to tell fortunes by examining hands. Their talent is to sing, dance and steal.”

Science made its own contribution to the culture of exclusion. In 1783, Hein-

rich Grellmann established, through linguistic analysis, that Gypsies originated in India. In *Die Zigeuner*, he admitted to feeling “an evident repugnancy, like a biologist dissecting some nauseating, crawling thing in the interests of science.” This, presumably, was what allowed Herder, almost immediately after Grellmann, to describe Gypsies as an “abject Indian caste.” The nausea of scientists would show itself in various forms throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. (There is also a Marxist variant, already all but forgotten, in which Gypsies were understood as exceptions to the scientific rules of historical materialism.) Martin Block’s own *Die Zigeuner* (1936), a basically empathic history and one of the major sources of our century, begins like this: “Gypsies are different from us. One realizes this as soon as one meets them. The awe which former centuries felt for a people whom they considered to be in league with the devil may be a thing of the past; but somehow all of us experience an involuntary feeling of distrust or repulsion in their presence. It is difficult to find a reason for this.”

Indeed, it is. More recent scholars have looked to Gypsy belief systems, particularly the intense preoccupation with pollution: *gadje*, non-Gypsies, are *mahrime*, “unclean.” This inversion had been noticed in the nineteenth century by Pinkerton, and also by the nineteenth-century explorer Sir Richard Burton. Fonseca gives many examples of the “tightly woven taboos and forms which guard against contamination” among the Gypsies she meets. “They constitute Romipen—‘Gypsyhood’—and they are the key to the unusual ability of Gypsies everywhere to endure persecution and drastic changes of many kinds and remain Rom.” This is certainly an advance. But here, too, the attribution of a fixed, atemporal quality to Gypsiness, even coming from Gypsies, tends to make some portion of Gypsies disappear: those who don’t follow “the old ways,” those who have assimilated.

The question of assimilation is central to the Gypsy literature, even when it is expressed in terms of Christian/non-Christian, settled/nomadic, white/black. (“Black Man” is old British slang for Gypsy.) The British divine and anti-slavery activist Samuel Roberts aired it in 1830, calling Gypsies “the *human paradox*” because they would not assimilate. (A similar argument was popular about the Jews.) Burton believed their non-assimilation made them an “ethnological marvel.” Block wrote that “it is very seldom that he [the Gypsy] becomes completely assimilated. No one

can explain this. The preservation of his independence is a gypsy instinct.”

The point, of course, is that all this was a construction, an illusion, an expression of fear and prejudice. Gypsies do have a history, and their history is just as “discursive” as the histories of other groups, and in some ways even more so. Like and unlike other marginal groups, Gypsies, too, struggle with the excruciations of loyalty and assimilation. The problem is not that these people live outside of time, but that they have left very few records, even oral ones, of their life in time, records that would constitute something recognizable as “history.” They lack the territory and fixed structures, and the written histories of claims to land and fixed structures, that allow us *gadje* to feel like something other than itinerants. And so the history of Gypsies and the history of Gypsiness, the reality and the idea, are more nearly identical than is the case with most groups.

“And so one has to wonder,” Fonseca writes, “are the Gypsies really nomadic by ‘nature,’ or have they become so because they have never been allowed to stay?” Another cart-horse question. Of course, this dilemma holds true for all the world’s minorities. In the Gypsy case, the situation is complicated by the pervasive belief that Gypsies who settle and blend are no longer true Gypsies, especially if they intermarry; and because there are no “original Gypsies.” The idea of a sedentary population from which Gypsies departed as a segment, which would hold open the possibility of a “return,” almost removes the sense from the term Gypsy, though some Indian writers have made claims along these lines.

The especially radical subjectivity of Gypsiness may explain one of the great peculiarities of the literature: the use of analogy. The most common European names for Gypsies—Gypsies, *Zigeuner* and their variants—are themselves analogies, the one based on Egyptians, the other on *Athinganoi*, a minor Byzantine heretical sect. Gypsies have also gone under such names as Tatar, Saracen, Moor, Bohemian and heathen. Gypsies’ words for themselves often indicate a trade (the Ursari, for example, are bear-trainers); the increasingly common Rom means “man.” In the literature, the most usual analogies link Gypsies with blacks and Jews. One name used for some Gypsies is Kalo, “black,” which is also the meaning of the Finnish term *Mustalainen*. “In their brilliant sense of color and their taste for glitz,” Fonseca writes, “along with the necessary flair to carry it off, they [Gypsies] resembled African

Americans. . . .” The Gypsies-blacks analogy goes far back, to early sources which asked whether Gypsies were the sons of Ham. And it recurs, adjusted to fit each new European worldview.

The unknown author of *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Bampfylde-Moore Carew, Commonly call'd The King of the Beggars*, a popular mid-eighteenth-century novel that sends said Carew adventuring in Gypsy guise, picked up Jonson's trope: “in this his History he shall be able to

minge somewhat of the *Ermine* with the Spots of the *Æthiops*.” A century later, an English journalist, quoted by the Gypsy activist-scholar Ian Hancock in his *The Pariah Syndrome*, which appeared in 1987, described Gypsies' hair as “thick and woolly; their lips are of negro heaviness, and their teeth white as pearls; the nose is considerably flattened, and the whole countenance is illumined, as it were, by lively, rolling eyes.” In 1878, another European

source noted “a strong resemblance to the negro physiognomy and character.”

Of course, Gypsies, to the extent that they have a distinctive look, do not resemble the stock image of black Africans, any more than Aethiops have spots. Since the nineteenth century, such comparisons have had more to do with culture (as in Fonseca's glitz) and politics. Indeed, as Marek Kohn points out in *The Race Gallery*, his excellent new book on race science, Gypsy activists have begun to refer to themselves as black and to *gadje* as white, in order to enter, by means of analogy, a historical narrative of oppression and resistance larger and better known than their own.

Fonseca equates Gypsies with Jews mainly in her discussions of the Gypsy Holocaust and of post-cold war repression—murders, arsons, bombings, legislation. These are the best chapters in her book. Again, the allegory is of long standing. Moncada's triad Jew-Gypsy-Moor, like so much in Reconquista Spain, prefigured Nazi policy, which arranged extermination on a racial basis for Jews, Gypsies and blacks. But the Spanish concern with *limpieza de sangre*, or purity of blood, was not the crucial link between Jews and Gypsies, even in Iberia. Gypsies were associated with Jews because they shared wandering ways, a “parasitic” social station, lack of a homeland, a perceived refusal to assimilate and non-belief in Christianity. They also shared persecution.

Voltaire expected both groups to disappear. He believed that the Gypsies were already on their way. “The same catastrophe can befall the Jews: when the society of man is perfected, when every people carries on its trade itself, no longer sharing the fruits of its work with these wandering brokers, the number of Jews will necessarily diminish. . . . [They] will no longer be able to sustain a separate society . . . [and] will assimilate among the scum of the other peoples.” This brutal evolutionism (which evolved into a brutal revolutionism) migrated easily into science, with well-known results, though a religious or quasi-religious equation of Jew and Gypsy persisted well into the nineteenth century.

Samuel Roberts devoted a book to it, *Parallel Miracles; or, the Jews and the Gypsies*, in 1830. The two groups' refusal to assimilate was so incredible, he believed, that it must be a holy miracle: “The Jews abound with peculiarities, both civil and religious, which preclude their assimilating with any other people. The Gypsies possess no such peculiarities, and yet they continue equally detached from

In Front of Casa Marcello

The sun's setting, and the corner bar bangs its shutters.
Lampposts flare up, as though an actress

paints her eyelids dark violet, looking both rum and scary.
And the headache is parachuting squarely

behind enemy wrinkles. While five enormous
pigeons on the Palazzo Minelli's cornice

are copulating in the last rays of sunset,
paying no heed, as our Stone Age ancestors

did, no doubt, to their scruffy neighbors,
already asleep or a little nervous.

The booming bells of the slant bell tower
rooted in the ultramarine sky over

this town are like fruits keen on falling rather
than hitting the ground. If there is another

life, someone picks them up there. Well, pretty
soon we'll find out. Here, where plenty

of saliva, rapturous tears, and even
seed has been shed, in a nook of the earthly Eden,

I stand in the evening, absorbing slowly
with the dirty sponge of my lungs the lovely,

transparent, autumn-cum-winter, lucent
local oxygen, pink with loosened

tiles and a windowsill's carnation,
and giving the scent of cells' liberation

from time. The money-like, crumpled water
of the canal, buying off the palazzo's outer

riches, ends up with a somewhat shady,
peeling-off deal that includes a shaky

caryatid, shouldering still the organ
of speech, with its cigarette, and ogling

the scenes, breathtaking for their oblivion
of propriety, happening in the avian

bedroom, exposed to a passing party,
and resembling now a windswept palm tree,

now a jumble of numerals insane with their quest for timing,
now a line scrawled in haste and rhyming.

JOSEPH BRODSKY

—translated from the Russian by the author

all others. Surely, then, it is clearly evident that the state of the Gypsies is, at least, equally miraculous with that of the Jews." Richard Burton made the same point forty-five years later, in a secular way. "The Jew, like the Gypsy, stands alone, isolated by character, if not by blessing," Roberts thought that the two would return together in happiness to adjoining homelands, but Burton, a connoisseur of ethnic hatred, believed they would be forever separated: "Both have had their exodus, and are dispersed over the world. Both have peculiarities of countenance which distinguish them from the 'Gentiles,' whom they hate, the Goyim and the Busne [gadje].... Similarity of conditions, however, which should breed sympathy, as usual amongst men has borne only hatred."

Whatever hatred Jews and Gypsies may have had toward each other in Burton's time, it would be overshadowed by the hatred that the Germans had for both. Nazi legislation against Gypsies took over existing Weimar laws, but began extending them almost immediately after Hitler became chancellor. Gypsies were initially categorized as asocials; after passage of the Nuremberg laws in 1935, Gypsies and blacks became racial enemies, with "alien blood." The explicit racialization of Gypsies gained momentum the following year, when Dr. Robert Ritter was assigned to carry out systematic racial-identity investigations so that internment, already well under way, might be done scientifically. In 1937, his associate Dr. Adolf Würth wrote that "the Gypsy question is for us today primarily a racial question. Thus, the national socialist state will basically have to settle the Gypsy question just as it has solved the Jewish question. We have already begun." The usual number given for Gypsies killed as a result of fascist policy is half a million.

The Gypsy extermination campaign was widely ignored after the war. Only in the 1970s did substantial research begin to be published, and much remains to be done. Still, the broader story—that Gypsies, like Jews, were targeted on a racial basis for extermination—seems indisputable. So Elie Wiesel's opposition to having Gypsies in the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, which led to a public battle with Simon Wiesenthal, needs some explanation, as does the bitter fight between the historians Sybil Milton and Yehuda Bauer, with Milton arguing the case for inclusion. The explanation is somewhat more complicated than the anti-Semite Burton's view that Jews and Gypsies hate

each other.

Bauer argued for the exclusion of the Gypsies on the grounds that the commemoration of non-Jewish victims would "submerge the specific Jewish tragedy in the general sea of atrocities." Wiesel, according to Michael Berenbaum, believed that such inclusion could "trigger an irreversible process that will erase the memory of six million Jews. He contends that people will speak first of eleven million people, six million of whom were Jews; then of eleven million people, some of whom were Jews; and finally of eleven million people, deleting any reference to Jews." These fears seem to me perfectly reasonable. We can hardly doubt that many people want to deny, in some fashion, the Jewishness of the Holocaust; and it may be likely that their numbers will grow as the survivor generation passes on and the events recede further in time.

And yet it is important, morally and historically, to remember that Jews and Gypsies have had roughly the same enemies before, during and after the war. Fonseca admirably and abundantly demonstrates this, bringing the story into the present day. Her description of her doomed efforts to reunite a Gypsy family separated by the Polish-German

border is heartbreaking. Here her distancing tricks disappear, and she feels, she communicates, how dark the night can be along the new Europe's frontiers.

Fonseca has not written a policy book and does not make policy recommendations. And yet the simple act of writing about Gypsies at all constitutes, in the new Europe, a policy recommendation. The eminent sociologist Dominique Schnapper, in her otherwise excellent book *L'Europe des immigrés* (1991), manages not to mention Gypsies, and the same is all but true of the Institute for East-West Studies' volume *Minorities: The New Europe's Old Issue* (1993), to give but two examples of the prevalent forgetfulness. Given the violence against Gypsies in recent years, the "reparation" of Gypsies from Germany to Romania, and the fact that Gypsies have more experience of being a European minority (and European "immigrants") than any group apart from the Jews, such an omission is shocking. Europeans are being killed today because they are Gypsies. It has happened before, it is happening now.

SCOTT L. MALCOMSON's most recent book is *Empire's Edge: Travels in South-Eastern Europe, Turkey and Central Asia* (Verso).

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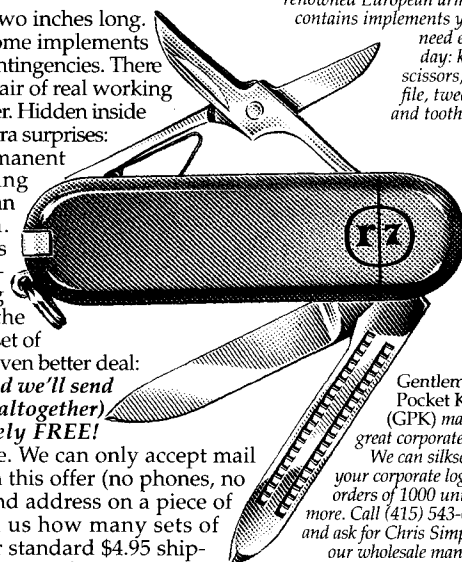
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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Organized labor

WITH MARION BARRY ABANDONING his ailing city to heal himself, this may not be the best week to pay homage to urban America. Springtime is always a mixed blessing in D.C. anyway. The azaleas bloom in living Technicolor, the days linger into blue velvet twilight, the restaurants drag plastic chairs onto their patios—and the rats come out to frolic. They're bold, too. Like the bears of Yellowstone, they'll come right up to you and practically eat out of your hand as you dine al fresco. Just another reminder—along with school closings, permanently stalled snow plows and potholes the size of Crater Lake—of the crumbling infrastructure in Barrytown.

THE D.C. SLUMP ASIDE, THOUGH, cities are better off than they have been in a long while. The FBI's 1995 statistics show that crime, especially violent crime, has declined disproportionately in cities with populations of over 1 million. (In rural counties, meanwhile, it has increased by 3 percent.) New York, which has experienced some of the most dramatic decreases, is allegedly becoming more livable all the time. None of this will do much, of course, to dissuade the many Americans who continue to believe that life in the country or even the scruffy fringes of suburbia is purer, safer, freer.

THEY'RE DECAMPING FOR THESE godlier realms every day. For the first time in a century, rural areas are now adding to their population—between 1991 and 1994, more than 1.1 million people moved into rural counties and small towns—and now more than ever anti-urbanism is a shibboleth that seems to unite white Americans of all political hues. It used to be that philosophical anti-urbanism was more or less the exclusive province of the left—utopian socialists, Brook Farm transcendentalists, '60s hippies. Now it's partly converged with the right—Montana freemen, survivalists, angry white exiles from the heterogeneous cities, whose neo-bucolicism has a sinister, exclusionary slant. As the urban sociologist Joel Kotkin pointed out recently in *The Washington Post*, "the entire Northwest region, as well as Arizona, has become something of a bastion for all sorts of far-right, anti-Semitic, and anti-

black organizations." But whatever end of the political spectrum they represent, the anti-urbanites all claim a kind of moral superiority, casting themselves as modern-day Natty Bumppos returning to a land they alone understand empathically enough to tame. If these Mountain Men really cared about living lightly on the land instead of just looking like they do, they'd move to the cities, where people walk or use public transportation instead of relying on gas-guzzling cars and trucks; where they are more likely to recycle; where everybody eats at restaurants instead of expending fuel on thousands of individual meals; where, in general, resources are more efficiently consolidated. Anyway, who's to say that the Montana landscape, with its tribes of urban refugees recreating movie-made memories of dude ranches and pioneer days is any less a cultural artifact than, say, the Broadway IRT?

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN skeptical about the fetishization of the natural—and nowhere more so than in its application to childbirth, where natural means "empowering" women to forgo painkilling medication. The noble savagery of drug-free labor originated in the 1920s and '30s, in the attempt of various sandal-wearing Europeans to rescue modern women from the corruptions of modern life. Grantly Dick-Read, the evocatively named British founder of the natural childbirth movement, was a great enthusiast of "primitive" woman—the peasant who revealed her true essence when she squatted in the field to drop an infant or two. The Lamaze and LeBoyer methods of childbirth preparation, both developed by charismatic male obstetricians, followed in this same vaguely anthropological spirit. Later, in the 1970s, American feminists helped to transform natural childbirth from a sign of virtue into a political statement. (They also, it must be said, helped humanize the whole process—bringing fathers into the delivery room and ensuring that laboring women would no longer be strapped down like Susan Hayward in one of those loony bin movies of the '50s.) Huff and puff your way through contractions and you were reclaiming the birth process from the hegemonic authority of mainstream medicine; take the epidural and you were playing into the hands of the patriarchy. My sister, a family practitioner who delivered babies until a few years ago, used to tell stories about expectant couples who'd come to her with long lists of medical "interventions" they would not tolerate—starting with IVs for replenishing the

mother's fluids. How could they possibly know what they'd tolerate on the roller coaster of labor?

THESE DAYS, I'M HAPPY TO REPORT, pregnant women are subject to a good deal less guilt-mongering on this score. The yuppie fantasy of the completely natural birth has gone the way of the Kildare-era fantasy of the completely medically managed one. *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, the locus classicus for smart-shopping first-time moms, takes a moderate view: avoid medication if you can without danger to yourself or the baby, but don't blame yourself if you can't. The healthy outcome is more important

than the "good" labor. The childbirth preparation class I've been taking promotes a similar philosophy. "Every labor is different, so don't rule out anything in advance. Some of you will go completely natural; some will be yelling for an epidural in the parking lot. Either's okay," our teacher reassured us at the first ses-

sion. Judging from the reaction to the video we saw of three different real-life labors, the class seemed to agree. The first couple shown—Jim and Carol—were wheat germ and burlap types who lucked into a relatively straight-forward labor. She breathed a lot and gazed beatifically into the camera after each wrenching contraction; he issued detailed instructions in an eerily calm tone and fixed her with a swami-like smile. "Jim's an android," my husband whispered halfway through. But couple number two, the refreshingly of-this-world Donna and Carl, won everybody's hearts. When Donna groaned, Carl suggested that "maybe you shouldna had that big steak and cheese." As a "focal point"—the visual aid that birth coaches are supposed to use to distract laboring women from the pain—he held up a Polaroid of the family cat. At one point, for no apparent reason, he broke into a loud, tuneless chorus of "She'll be Comin' 'Round the Mountain." I would have divorced him on the spot, but Donna seemed to love the guy. She also kicked up quite a fuss—making her much easier to relate to than the ever-so-centered Carol. And though she dutifully tried out the soothing shower and all the different birthing positions the nurses suggested, she eventually took some painkillers, and ended up soon after with a cute baby boy. I'm not ruling out anything except the big steak and cheese. Or maybe just the cheese. The big steak sounds like a form of healing.

MARGARET TALBOT



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